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Friday August 22 1997

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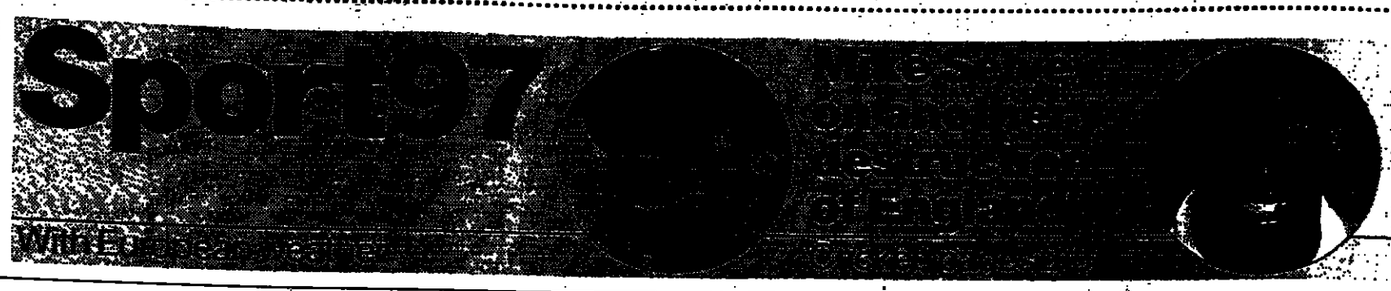

Wright on cliffhanger for Arsenal's top goalhanger

Football, pages 6/7

Scots finance chiefs say no

Warning of jobs and investment crisis

Sarah Ryle

THE Government yesterday suffered another blow to its flagship plans for Scottish devolution when business leaders came out in open revolt against the proposals.

The assault by Scotland's powerful financial community came 24 hours after Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, launched the cross-party campaign to secure approval for the proposed new parliament in the September 11 referendum.

Yesterday's setback came after weeks of allegations of Labour sleaze north of the Border had jeopardised the campaign's prospects.

Scottish Financial Enterprise, representing leading banks, insurers, accountants and lawyers, warned that the tax-raising powers set out in the devolution white paper for the Edinburgh parliament would endanger investment and jobs and lead to a brain drain.

> 'If the Government is trying to create a single market in Europe then it makes no sense to fragment the UK business sector in this way'
>
> **Alan Mitchell, assistant director of the Scottish CBI**

The body, whose members include the Bank of Scotland, the insurer Scottish Widows and BT, said higher taxes would drive business south of the border and into the hands of their English rivals.

Grant Baird, SFE executive director, voiced three main business concerns about Labour's proposals:

☐ Tax powers should not disadvantage Scottish firms or firms like BT which invest in Scotland by raising employment costs. They fear key employees might move to other parts of the UK — a kind of brain drain southwards — and that firms would site new business elsewhere.

☐ They argue that giving local authorities tax-raising powers could lead to significant differences in business rates. Scottish firms have spent 20 years fighting for a uniform business rate across the UK and were due to achieve it in 1999.

☐ They believe that confusion about taxation of pensions policies could drive customers away from Scottish financial institutions into the arms of English-based rivals.

The Scottish financial community's intervention, after weeks of relative silence, could prove to be as damaging as that of business leaders in the 1979 referendum campaign.

Heated business opposition in Wales as in Scotland to the last Labour government's proposals for devolution is widely seen to have helped defeat premier James Callaghan — and ultimately bring down his administration.

The attack came as Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, arrived in Scotland to bolster Labour's campaign for a double yes vote in the referendum, in favour of setting up the parliament and giving it tax-raising powers.

Mr Baird indicated that he expected the referendum to endorse a Scottish parliament but to refuse to give it tax-raising powers. "I would have a wager on a yes/no vote."

With public opinion swinging against the proposed powers to raise income tax north of the border by up to 3p in the pound, it is known that many cabinet ministers, especially non-Scots, would privately welcome such an outcome.

Even so, Mr Mandelson claimed that Scots had no alternative but to vote yes/yes if "they believe in Scotland, its national identity and its destiny".

"I think it is very important for a Scottish parliament, for its credibility, to have that financial responsibility of tax-varying powers. That is why we're committed to a double-yes vote," he said.

"Why be half-hearted about it? I am very confident that we'll have a double-yes vote."

Mr Mandelson, who is to be joined in Scotland later today by the deputy premier, John Prescott, lambasted the Scottish Tories' no campaign as a "desperate stunt".

The Scottish CBI's assistant director, Alan Mitchell, endorsed the SFE's stance. He said: "If the Government is trying to create a single market in Europe then it makes no sense to fragment the UK business sector in this way."

He echoed the SFE's concern that a Scottish parliament would "seek to extend its powers" — even if voters reject the second part of the referendum, the so-called Tartan Tax.

The fresh opposition provided ammunition for Labour's leading critic of devolution, the MP for Linlithgow, Tam Dalyell. He said: "Scottish firms do not believe the parliament would stick to 3p on the basic rate."

Ashes to ashes . . . death risk despite stopping but campaigners point to life-saving advantages of quitting

PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER TOOTH

Decades of tobacco trigger change in lungs, say researchers. 'Once this switch is turned on, it appears to be permanent, which may explain why long-term ex-smokers who have not had a cigarette in 25 years are still at high risk for getting cancer'

Smoking study shows new cancer risk

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

THE deadly nature of cigarettes was re-emphasised yesterday with a new study suggesting that people who have smoked for more than 25 years may have caused lung cell damage which cannot be stopped by quitting.

According to researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, long-term smoking appears to trigger a biological switch in the lungs which causes cell growth and this in turn could lead to cancer.

The researchers looked at three groups: non-smokers, those who had smoked for less than 25 years, those who had smoked for longer.

In people who smoked at least 20 a day for 25 years, the doctors found significantly more evidence of a protein called GRP, which spurs lung cells to divide.

They say, in the Journal of Respiratory Medicine and Critical Care, that 77 per cent of the long-term smokers showed the protein, but it appeared in only 15 per cent of those who had smoked for less than 25 years. The long-term smokers showed the protein even if they had stopped smoking some time ago.

Dr Jill Siegfried, of Pittsburgh University's lung cancer centre, who led the research, said: "Once this switch is turned on, it appears to be permanent, which may explain in part why long-term ex-smokers who have not had a cigarette in over 25 years are still at high risk for getting lung cancer."

She said, however, there was potential good news in the findings, as the protein could help identify patients at high risk of lung cancer who could receive early treatment. In the longer term, if a way could be found of turning off the "switch" it could mean ex-smokers would not get lung cancer.

The anti-smoking group Action on Smoking and Health said the research should not be seen as an excuse for long-term smokers not quitting.

A spokeswoman said: "Most smokers die from heart disease. Stopping smoking reduces the risk of heart disease almost immediately. It's always worth giving up, whatever your age, but the sooner the better."

Dr Jean King, of the Cancer Research Campaign, said smoking caused at least 24 separate diseases and there were clear benefits from stopping at any time.

"There are immediate benefits, short-term benefits and and long-term benefits from quitting smoking. This is a small scale study and it doesn't change the message that stopping smoking brings clear benefits both for individuals and their families."

Dr King added: "Within two years of stopping smoking the increased risk of heart disease is halved. Even if the findings for lung cancer turn out to be true, there are many other unpleasant diseases, like emphysema, which damage the quality of life and which can be prevented by stopping smoking."

A large-scale study published in 1994 found that cigarettes would eventually kill one in two smokers.

More than half the 20,000 heart attacks each year in people under 50 have been attributed to cigarettes – with smokers in their 30s and 40s five times more likely to suffer a heart attack than non-smokers.

● One of the most powerful men in the tobacco industry yesterday admitted publicly for the first time that smoking was lethal and nicotine was an addictive drug.

Geoffrey Bible, chairman and chief executive of Philip Morris, testified in a Florida lawsuit that cigarette smoking may have caused 100,000 deaths.

Hanging onto a dead heat by a hair

Chris Hawkins

ALEX Greaves should have grabbed all the headlines when she became the first woman rider to win a top class Group One race — in a dead-heat at York yesterday.

But instead her thunder was stolen by the extraordinary riding feat of Kevin Darley, who shared the £106,000 spoils after clinging to his mount by the mane when his bit broke after just one furlong.

Despite having effectively lost his steering, 37-year-old Darley managed to keep Coastal Bluff on course to pass the winning post level with Greaves on board Ya Malak in the five-furlong Nunthorpe Stakes at the Ebor meeting.

Passing the post was the easy part. Darley then had to decide how to pull up without any brakes. He took the only available option — and bailed out, leaving Coastal Bluff to run himself out down the course.

Kevin Darley (front) clings to Coastal Bluff by the mane

Darley ran after the horse, caught it, took off the saddle and ran back to the weighing room. Even though this took a quarter of an hour, by the time Darley returned to the jockeys' room the judge was still studying the photograph and had not been able to separate the first two home. The eventual verdict of a dead-heat was universally popular.

Darley, surprisingly composed after the hairiest ride of a 20-year career, said: "He took a strong hold straightaway and I tried to take him back. It was then the bit broke. I was half a length up on everything but began to roll about until horses came up either side of me and took over the steering. Fortunately, he has a long mane and I used this to keep him going.

"Pulling-up was impossible and if it hadn't been for Kieren Fallon [riding Averti, third] I don't know what would have happened. He came up by the side of me and steered him round the car park and into the rails, which eventually stopped him.

"Thank God it all ended well and Coastal Bluff got a share of it — he would definitely have won with a bridle."

Greaves, aged 32, who has long been regarded as the best woman jockey in the country, rode Ya Malak for her husband, the trainer Dandy Nicholls.

Greaves said: "I think a dead-heat was a marvellous result — neither horse deserved to lose."

Racing, Sport 97, page 13

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Better public transport will end two-car family, claims Prescott ☐ Business demands faster answers to traffic problems

Orbital rail line to cut road freight

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

AN ORBITAL rail route to relieve congestion in London and get freight off the roads is being planned by John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister.

The route will *mainly* use Victorian railway tunnels, with a £120 million link built in east London to complete the circuit.

Mr Prescott announced the plan yesterday when he launched a consultation document ahead of a spring white paper and legislation designed to get the nation using public transport.

The orbital link was the brainchild of Mr Prescott in 1990 but he said that then no one took him seriously. Now he has ordered London Underground *to do a feasibility* study and come up with a plan.

The route is close to the existing main line terminals and would run along the North London line past King's Cross, Euston and St Pancras. It turns south through Earl's Court and then east through Clapham junction and north on the East London line through New Cross to Whitechapel. A new stretch of line would run north to Dalston and join the North London line.

Mr Prescott said he wanted freight from ports like Felixstowe and Southampton — now grinding towards London in lorries on overcrowded roads and then turning on to the clogged up the M25 — to travel by rail from the ports. It would head into London on existing rail links, go round the orbital link and then head towards its destination without ever leaving the railway.

"This is what integrating the transport system is all about," Mr Prescott said. "The tunnels, the trains and the tracks are there. It is just a question of linking them up. The cost could be minimal. It is just a question of finding out how to do it."

Apart from the orbital rail link there was not much in the document that had not been leaked previously or discussed. Everyone from the road haulage lobby to environment groups was critical of the Government's failure to press ahead quicker.

Mr Prescott said the idea was not to bully people out of their cars but to provide such a good alternative in public transport that they were persuaded out of their cars.

"Families have two cars not as a symbol of prosperity but because of the failure of the public transport system. They do not want to pay two lots of tax and two lots of insurance to keep two cars on the road. *If they could* reduce it to one car for flexibility and use public transport for the rest of their journeys they would. That will be the test after five years in office. Have we persuaded two-car families to go down to one?"

Groups are asked to give their views on dedicated bus lanes, taxing company car parking in cities, toll roads, and new methods of regulating buses and railways to integrate timetables and services.

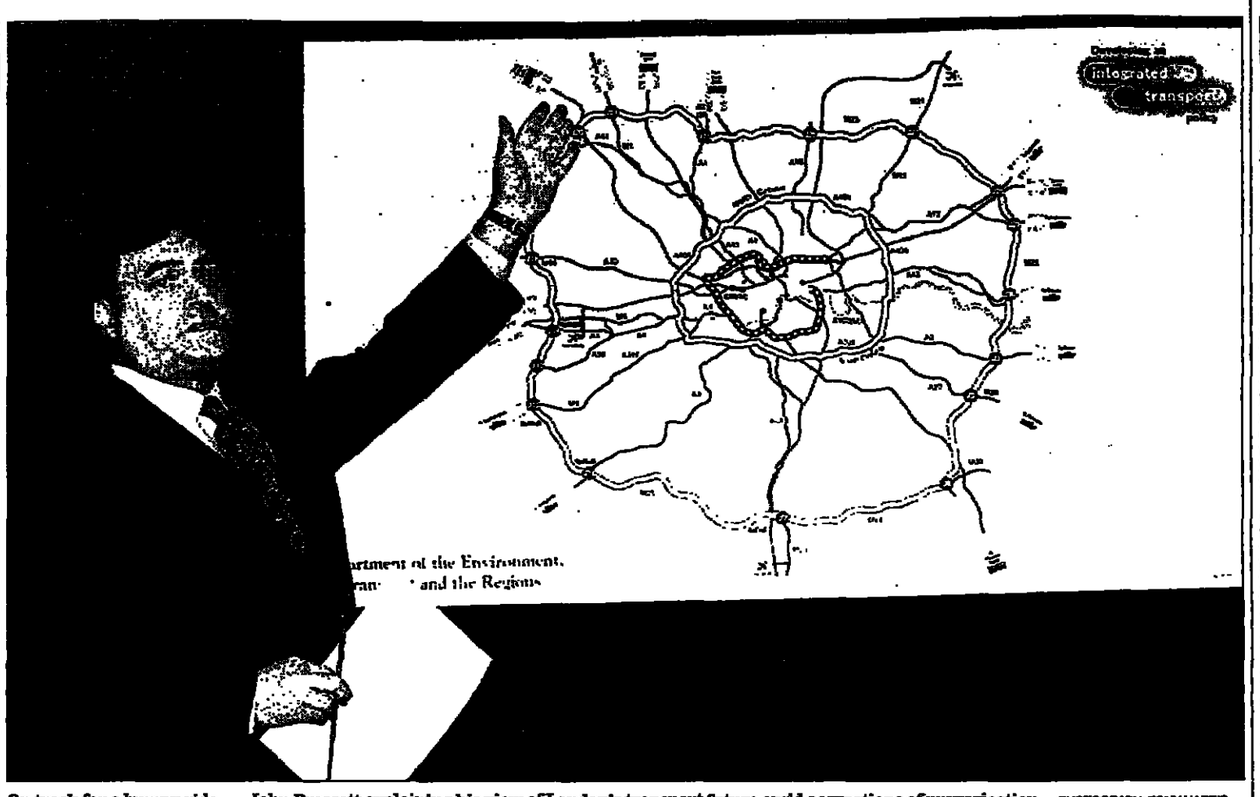
Terry Stockley, chief executive *of NFC, a company that* runs 13,000 trucks and rail freight services, said: "We have discussed all these *ad nauseam*. What we want to do is to get on with it. We are in an acute situation already, the roads are clogged. We cannot wait much longer for solutions. The only new idea is the orbital rail project. Its a good one. Let's discover if it will work and then get on with it."

Roger Higman, from Friends of the Earth, echoed his sentiments. "It smacks of *prevarication. All the while* we are consulting, people are buying more cars and clogging up the roads. August has record sales for new cars yet we were without a single policy to get people out of cars. Surely action cannot be delayed much longer."

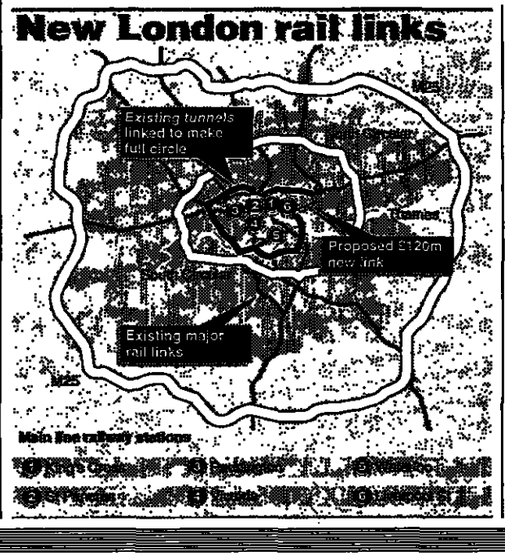
London First, a business organisation, welcomed the orbital rail link idea "to make sense of the jigsaw of rail services currently on offer". Stephen O'Brien, the chief executive, gave a qualified welcome to the rest of the ideas. "Business is willing to pay for better public transport. The crucial condition is that any funds thus obtained from road pricing or taxes on parking are pumped back into improved public transport.

"Business now wants to work *with the Government to* make improved public transport a reality."

Leader comment, page 12; What Prescott must do, page 13



On track for a bumpy ride . . . John Prescott explaining his view of London's transport future amid accusations of prevarication PHOTOGRAPH: TONY HARRIS



Choking Paris rides half-fare

Paul Webster in Paris

ALL public transport in the Paris region, including the Mêtro, buses and commuter trains, operated on half-price tickets yesterday in an attempt to cut hot-weather pollution blamed on motor vehicle emissions.

The concessions will continue today in the hope of *persuading motorists to* leave their cars at home.

After 10 days of high ozone counts, doctors warned mothers to keep babies at home and advised people with respiratory problems not to take exercise. There has been an epidemic of sore throats and runny eyes, and predictions of a rise in other exhaust poisons.

The Paris public transport company, the RATP, issued a poster showing an empty pram and thanking passengers for taking up the half-price offer to reduce the health threat.

The government ordered *the measure after criticism* of the environment minister, Dominique Voynet, by members of her own Green Party, backed by the former environment minister, Corinne Lepage. Ms Voynet was accused of inaction after pollution reached the second of three designated levels in several big cities.

Level 3, which would probably have been reached if this were not a holiday period, is a maximum alert, when deaths could follow.

But Ms Voynet has already implicitly abandoned legislation drawn up by her predecessor stipulating that, during alerts, vehicles would be allowed into the city on alternate days, depending on their number plates.

Ms Voynet said the measure would be ineffective, but she has supported other solutions, including *reduced speed limits.*

Other cities including Rouen, Toulouse and Strasbourg, have reported high pollution. Strasbourg has put on extra trams and buses to discourage car use.

Families stuck in repeat cycle

Review

Lyn Gardner

Blue Heart
Traverse Theatre Edinburgh

IN THE week in which Peter Snow discovered the son he *never knew he had*, Caryl Churchill's baffling but exciting new double bill has a particular topicality.

In the second play, Blue Kettle, 40-year-old Derek spends his time persuading aging women that he is their long-lost son, given up for adoption years before. He is charming, kind and attentive, and the risks he takes — introducing one to another with disastrous consequences — suggest his obsession goes beyond the mercenary.

In the first play, the furiously witty Heart's Desire, there are also signs of the invisible ties that bind. A husband and wife wait, with Aunt Maisy, for their daughter Susy to return after years in Australia. The web of emotions, shared history and long-practised evasions are crystallised in the brief moments before the doorbell rings and the outside world bursts in.

But it is the way it is said that is fascinating. In Blue Kettle, the two words of the title are gradually substituted for words in the text. "I *remember the names of every* boy in my kettle in every kettle I was at kettle," says Derek. By the end, language has been entirely stolen away. All that is left are the sounds of a B and a K, that sit like pistol shots on the palate. Pure, dangerous emotion. A kind of communication that syntax and sentence don't begin to embrace.

Both plays begin with music that suddenly twists and distorts the pure sound. The sense of disrupted spectacle is particularly apparent in Heart's Desire, when the family is gathered and the meal ready to celebrate the prodigal daughter's return. What follows is like a short piece of film repeatedly freeze-framed and re-run over and over again.

When the doorbell rings, *the visitors are as likely to be a* giant ostrich, Susy's Australian back-packing flat mate with whom she may be having a lesbian relationship, an East German border guard demanding identity papers or crazed, balaclava-clad terrorists who mow everyone down in a rattle of machine gun fire.

In Max Stafford-Clark's exquisitely acted production, there is no hint of the surreal. An air of complete normality pervades. The family appear to take these events in their stride, which suggests they are not just what might happen but are each individual's construction of their own reality. After all, most families harbour more skeletons in their cupboard than just a few small children who emerge from under the sink and dance playfully around the kitchen.

Language here, too, seems inadequate to express the depth of feelings. Sentences become truncated. Words are missed out. If anything, it makes meaning clearer. Events in the kitchen, whether projected thought or reality, have the distorting effect of a poltergeist loose in the house, laying bare the chaos lurking just beneath the neat kitchen surface.

Relationships and emotions are revealed in heightened detail. By the time Susy finally gets through the door, you know exactly why she went to Australia and wonder why the hell she came back. But you also know the cycle will repeat endlessly. In family life there is no beginning and no end. It just goes on and on.

Great train robber dies, aged 62

Roy James, frustrated racing driver, suffers heart attack

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

ROY James, one of the great train robbers and once London's best-known getaway driver, has died at the age of 62. His death comes as his partner in crime, Ronnie Biggs, begins his battle to avoid being extradited from Brazil to serve out his sentence.

James, originally from Fulham in west London, died of a heart attack at Brompton Hospital, west London, on Wednesday, his friend and fellow train robber, Bruce Reynolds, said yesterday.

Earlier this year, James had been released from a six-year prison term for wounding his father-in-law after a family row.

Roy "The Weasel" James is the fifth to die of the 13 men convicted of the £2.6 million robbery of the Glasgow-Euston train in August 1963.

In 1994, Buster Edwards hanged himself in London. In 1990, Charlie Wilson was shot dead at his villa in the south of Spain; the man believed to have killed him was himself shot dead in London earlier this year. Brian Field died in a car crash in 1977 and Bill Boal died in prison.

"He was part of the early setting-up of the robbery," said Reynolds of James last night. "He was a very nice guy."

Ronnie Biggs said from his home in Rio de Janeiro: "It's an awful shock. I will miss him. He was a very nice guy. I think the only argument I ever had with him was over a game of chess." Biggs said he was still hopeful over his own extradition problems.

James had been a successful Formula Two racing driver at the time of his arrest for the robbery. His skill behind the wheel led to him being used on robberies as a getaway driver, sometimes disguised as a chauffeur, but he later claimed that he had turned to crime because he could not get the sponsorship money that would have enabled him to be a successful Formula One driver. He played a key role in the robbery, but most of his proceeds were taken off him by erstwhile friends.

Roy James, once London's best-known getaway driver

While in prison, he trained as a silversmith and he started a successful business in Hatton Garden after his release. He moved into a large house in Surrey and was seen as one of the more successful of the ex-robbers. He was acquitted of a major VAT fraud at the Old Bailey in 1984.

He married Anthea, a teenage employee, in 1984, but the relationship was stormy and in 1993 he was arrested for shooting and wounding his father-in-law and injuring his wife. He was jailed for six years and according to friends never really recovered.

He said that he had the gun because he had taken it from another train robber, Bobby Welch, who was feeling depressed. After his arrest, James said that he felt "like blowing my brains out."

Obituaries, page 11

Dome gets Teflon cover after PVC 'toxic' row

Seumas Milne and Paul Brown

PETER Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, has decided to abandon the controversial German PVC covering for the planned Millennium Dome in Greenwich and switch to a more environmentally friendly glass fibre and Teflon covering, the Guardian has learned.

Government sources insisted last night that the switch to a US-made covering, at a cost of £8 million, was mainly being made to boost the chances of the structure becoming permanent and leaving an "enduring legacy", rather than for ecological reasons.

But environmental campaigners were cockahoop that their warnings of disruption to the New Millennium Experience if the Government persisted with what Greenpeace called a "toxic plastic throwaway monster" appeared to have met with a positive response.

Millennium Experience officials said that even with the new material, no British company had the capacity to meet the contract.

Gez Sagar, spokesman for the New Millennium Experience, said that the new roofing — PTFE-coated glass fibre — would last at least 25 years, about twice that of the PVC-covered material. Although it would more than double the cost to £14 million, savings from the construction budget would cover the higher bill and there would be no raiding of the budget for the exhibition project itself.

The decision to abandon the PVC was taken by the Millennium Experience board, but followed the intervention of Mr Mandelson, who has had two meetings with Greenpeace to defuse the criticisms and planned protests.

Mr Mandelson had strongly defended the PVC option, but is also anxious to match the permanent legacy achieved by his grandfather, the Labour minister Herbert Morrison, who oversaw the 1951 Festival of Britain.

Mr Sagar said last night that no decisions had yet been taken on what long-term uses might be made of the Greenwich site, though talks were going on with the Sports Council.

Greenpeace, which has been in conflict with Mr Mandelson's office for some weeks, was delighted with the result, although Teflon was not one of its original suggestions. PVC is controversial because it is claimed it can cause cancer when it is incinerated.

"This will change the whole concept of the dome away from being of the plastic throwaway culture of the 20th century to be a permanent part of the regeneration of north Greenwich in London," John Sauven, Greenpeace campaign director said last night.

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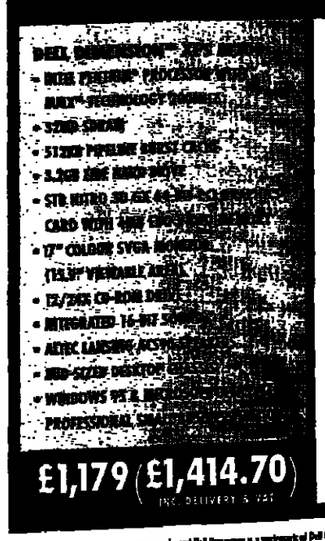

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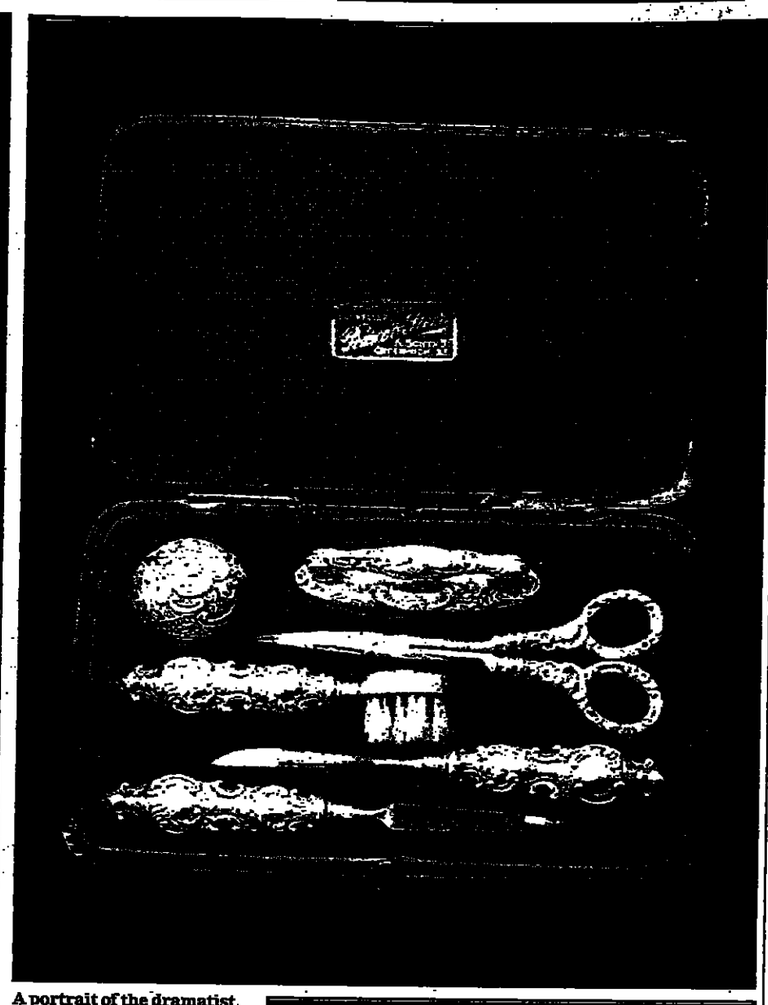
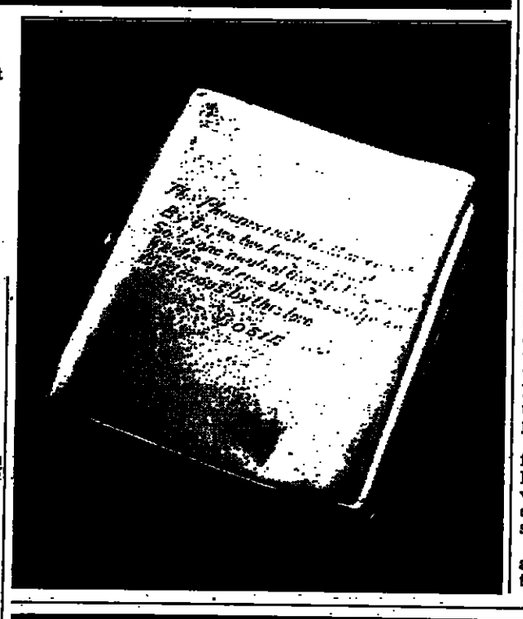


A portrait of the dramatist as a young man, left: Oscar Wilde as an undergraduate. Above, a silver manicure set presented by friends on his final birthday, and below, a silver cigarette case inscribed by Wilde's runaway lover, Lord Alfred Douglas



Oscar's case looks set to drive bidding quite Wilde

An inscribed love-token may send prices racing at auction. **Maev Kennedy** reports

ALMOST a century after his wretched death in exile, the Irishman with nothing to declare except his genius is set to take British society by storm all over again.

A silver cigarette case, a present from the man who destroyed Oscar Wilde's life, is predicted to make a record price at a London auction next month, along with a unique collection of objects from the Paris hotel room where Wilde died.

The Wilde expert at the auctioneers Bonham's says he has a long international list of buyers "hot-to-trot for Wilde". A jokey questionnaire he filled in as an Oxford undergranduate recently sold for £23,000, eight times the estimate.

Oscar the movie arrives next month, starring Stephen Fry. Oscar the playwright is rarely out of London's West End and there are 70 web-sites devoted to him.

A celebrity committee, including Kenneth Baker and Michael Foot, is collecting funds to complete a London memorial: a coffin-like bench, by sculptor Maggi Hamling, with Wilde's head poking up from one end.

Stephen Fry has bravely described Wilde as "Christ-like". The man who gave his student ambition as "becoming a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church" — because he liked the frocks — has even made it into Westminster Abbey, albeit in a window inscription, not a tomb.

In this context, David Park at Bonham's says the auction prices can only be guesses.

The star lot is a previously unrecorded love gift from Lord Alfred Douglas, found in the shadow of the most infamous hotel wallpaper in literary history, at the Hotel d'Alsace in Paris, where Wilde declared: "Either that wallpaper goes, or I do." The wallpaper stayed and Wilde died there on November 30 1900, poor, broken by two years' hard labour in Reading Gaol, a social outcast after the disastrous libel action and criminal trial for homosexuality which landed him there.

There is also a manicure set, given to Wilde for his last birthday, which comes with the sinister note: "Employed to help clean Wilde after death".

The items in the sale were gathered up from his room by the hotel owner, Jean Dupoirer — there was a typically Wildean muddle about settling the bill. They were later sold to a mining engineer, David Adamson, and are now being sold by his grand-daughter.

Lord Alfred Douglas, or Bosie, though beautiful as a Greek god, was no poet. The silver case comes inscribed not with a Wildeism: "A cigarette is a perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?" but with a ghastly verse by Bosie.

"The Phoenix riddle hath more wit/By us, we two being one are it./So to one neutral thing both sexes fit/We die and rise the same and prove/Mysterious by this love."

Scholars have politely seen echoes of the great metaphysical poet John Donne.

By the time Wilde was imprisoned, Bosie had fled to the Continent. Mr Park believes the cigarette case was one of several appeasing later presents. "Things were never the same between them after Wilde's release, but Lord Alfred Douglas was desperate to resume the friendship."

The sale also includes a silver cigarette holder, a cheap souvenir penknife, and a small ormolu mantel clock, apparently given to Wilde as a present by Monsieur Dupoirer. It is estimated at £2,000.

Oscar Wilde, "dying as I have lived, beyond my means", could never have afforded it.

At auction as in life, nothing is certain. Last month a portrait of the artist, and some preparatory sketches of Pooh Bear, came up at the same sale. Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde went for £6,700, the bear of little brain for £205,000.

Huge leap in NHS waiting lists blamed on Tories

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

HOSPITAL waiting lists increased by nearly 13 per cent over the past year, one of the steepest rises since the NHS was set up, official statistics published yesterday show. Nearly 1.2 million people are waiting for treatment.

The Government blamed the rise on Conservative underspending and said the queues were likely to grow over coming months.

Health Minister Alan Milburn said that hospitals would be given an early allocation of the extra money promised for the next financial year to help them cope.

But opposition parties and the British Medical Association said separate money should be provided now, rather than digging into funds meant for next year.

The statistics show that the number waiting at the end of June to be admitted to NHS hospitals in England was 1.19 million, an increase of 12.9 per cent (136,500 patients) since June 1996.

The number of patients waiting more than a year has risen by 36,600 since the end of June last year, when the total stood at 10,400.

Under the Patient's Charter, patients must be admitted within 18 months of going on the waiting list. At June 30, 388 patients had been waiting longer than 18 months, compared with 150 patients at the end of March and nine at the end of June 1996. The number of patients waiting less than a year for treatment stood at 1.15 million.

Mr Milburn said health authorities would get details in October of the extra £1.2 billion, due for the next financial year, two months earlier than planned. "This action will help bring financial stability and give health authorities more time to sensibly plan their budget decisions."

He said the new figures confirmed the "appalling legacy" left to the NHS by the Conservatives, and were the sixth quarterly rise in waiting lists since September 1995.

"Record NHS waiting lists and longer waiting times are the price patients have paid for the squandering of precious NHS resources on running the Tories' internal market," he said.

"We recognise that it is going to be hard to stem the Tory tide of rising waiting lists, which are likely to go on rising for some time. In the meantime, health authorities have been told to put urgent and emergency patients first and to avoid breaches of the Patient's Charter standard in waiting times.

"I do not want to see long waits for hospital treatment reappearing. The Government remains firmly committed to our pledge to cut waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients."

John Maples, Conservative health spokesman, said: "The figures show that the Government is likely to break its key election pledge to reduce NHS waiting lists by 100,000.

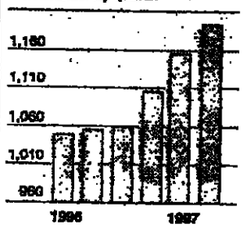
"The Government is exacerbating the problem by increasing costs and reducing efficiency. This means that the Labour-run NHS needs more money than a Conservative-run NHS to treat the same number of patients."

Evan Harris, Liberal Democrat health spokesman, attacked the Government for making promises it could not keep. "Labour cannot blame the Tory NHS spending record for the state of NHS waiting lists while at the same time adopting Tory spending plans," he said.

Sandy Macara, chairman of the British Medical Association, said the figures were no surprise and described them as "grim news for patients, for doctors and for all those who work in the NHS".

Waiting for a bed

Number of patients on waiting lists. Thousands. By quarter



Source: Dept of Health

McIntosh makes a comeback

Woman who quit Royal Opera returns to old job at National

Claire Armistead
Arts Editor

GENISTA McIntosh is to go back to her old job at the helm of the National Theatre six months after resigning as chief executive of the Royal Opera House.

McIntosh, who blamed ill-health for her departure from Covent Garden after only four months in the job, will return to the executive director's chair at the National on October 1.

But whereas her last six-year stint at the theatre was in tandem with Richard Eyre, the man along the corridor this time round will be Trevor Nunn, who takes over as artistic director on the same day.

The move will renew a working relationship which began in the 1970s when Nunn was running the Royal Shakespeare Company. It was at the RSC that McIntosh began her theatre career. She started as a casting director and rose steadily through the ranks, gaining a unique range of experience as an administrator in the subsidised sector.

Her return to the theatre has been greeted with delighted surprise by the industry. The executive director's chair has been empty since McIntosh, aged 50, left it, and at a press conference in June to launch his first season, Nunn hinted that staffing structures had changed and he might not fill it.

Eyre would certainly have backed her reappointment. When he learned he was losing McIntosh to the Royal Opera House, he said: "I wouldn't have been able to direct a third of the plays I have done without her as a partner."

Nunn said yesterday: "This is a great day for me, for the National Theatre and theatre in this country."

McIntosh insisted that she had been as surprised as anyone when first approached. "I didn't expect to be in the job market and I certainly didn't want to plunge myself into anything else just yet, but it was a great challenge."

Apart from the change of leadership, she will go back to a theatre bracing itself for life after the lottery. Since she left, the South Bank building has been surrounded by hoardings as it is revamped with a £31.6 million lottery grant.

"The rebuilding work is almost completed, so the theatre will have reinvented itself physically," said McIntosh. "There are huge questions about how it will work in its new form and about funding in general at a time when the money we've been getting from the Treasury has clearly begun to level off.

"Working in the arts is always a struggle, but it's usually — not always, but usually — an enjoyable struggle."

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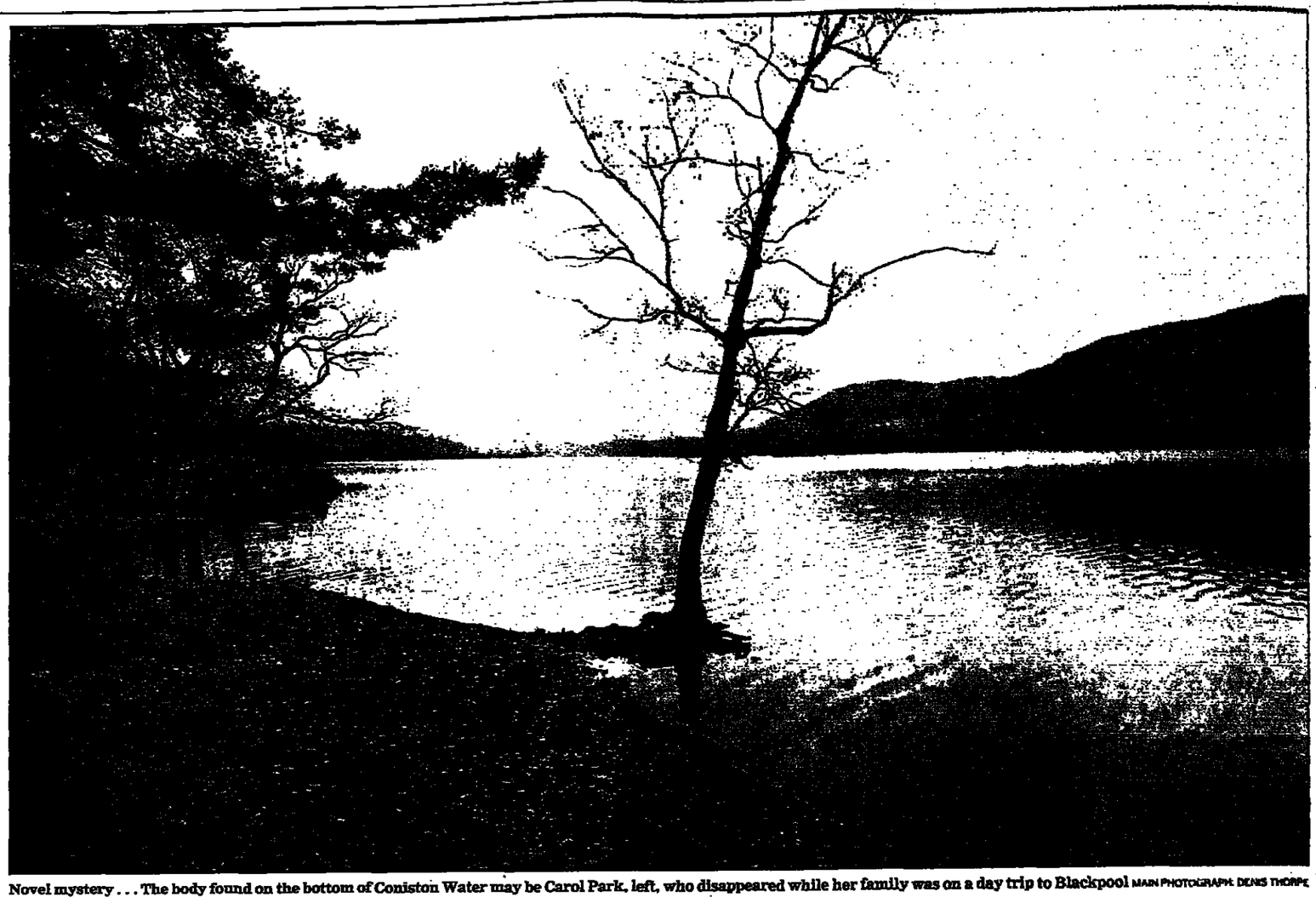
Ian Malin on professional strategy in rugby

Sport97 page 8

Body in baby doll nightie found 75 ft under water weighted down and tied up in sack may be teacher missing since 1976, reports Duncan Campbell

Police to name 'lady in the lake'



Novel mystery . . . The body found on the bottom of Coniston Water may be Carol Park, left, who disappeared while her family was on a day trip to Blackpool MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS THORPE

POLICE will this morning formally identify the woman whose body was found by divers in Coniston Water last week.

Speculation is mounting that the body in what has been called "the lady in the lake" case — after the Raymond Chandler crime novel — is that of Carol Park, a teacher who disappeared in 1976.

A spokeswoman for Cumbrian police said that the name would be given at a press conference in Penrith this morning. It is understood that the police were waiting to confirm dental records before the announcement.

The body was wearing a 1960s "baby doll" nightdress, and had been wrapped in plastic sheet and weighted down with lumps of metal. Four amateur sub-aqua divers found the package 75 feet down on the lake bottom. Scientists say that the body's decomposition had been slowed because of the low water temperature and because it was wrapped in plastic binliners and then placed in a canvas sack or rucksack and tied up with rope and string.

The body's condition indicated it had been in the water for a minimum of 15 years. At least 50 missing women were put forward as possibilities, and police have this week been contacting many of the families involved to tell them the body is definitely not that of their relative. Carol Park, a 31-year-old primary school teacher, has been missing since 1976. Her brother has voiced his concern that the body could be hers.

He was alerted when the police said that the woman had had his sister's build, height and hair style, being between 5ft 1in and 5ft 4in in height and aged between 20 and 30.

Carol Park, who had three young children, vanished from her home at Leece, near Barrow-in-Furness, about 14 miles from Coniston.

She had adopted the daughter of her sister, Christine Price, who was herself murdered seven years before Mrs Park went missing. A man was convicted of her sister's murder and jailed for life.

On the day Mrs Park disappeared she had intended to go with her husband, Gordon, a former teacher at a local school, and her children on a day trip to Blackpool. She stayed in bed saying she felt unwell. When her family returned, there was no sign of her. Her passport was not gone, and there was no indication she had taken any money.

A missing persons inquiry was launched but the disappearance remained a mystery.

Mr Park remarried a few years later and has another daughter. He is understood to be on holiday and it is not clear if he knows of the discovery.

Mrs Park's brother, Ivor Price, aged 57, said he had never given up hope of finding his sister alive. But, he said: "As days go by, my thoughts are closing in that it could be her. I am starting to be a realist.

"If Carol really is dead, I want this to be her. This will end all the waiting and the uncertainty.

"We have had 21 years of things like this and I really could not face up to another 21 years," said Mr Price, who is a scout for Manchester City football club. "It has been a nightmare."

A team of 30 detectives is working on the murder inquiry. Detective Superintendent Ian Douglas said that forensic scientists had taken a DNA sample from the body, but is is understood that the dental records are the key.

Among other names that have been suggested for the body is Helen McCourt, an insurance clerk from St Helens, who went missing in 1988.

£1m award against 'lawful' driver

Boy to receive huge damages after accident within speed limit

Vivek Chaudhary

LOCAL authorites were urged yesterday to review speed limits near schools and residential areas after accident damages of more than £1 million were agreed against a driver who nearly killed a schoolboy even though he was not breaking any traffic laws.

The settlement between the driver's insurance company and the family of Jamie Webb, aged seven, weeks before a High Court action was reached after the company admitted that even though the driver was within the speed limit he had been negligent.

It was agreed that the amount of compensation, which has still to be decided by the court, will exceed £1 million. The case could open the way to hundreds of others where people have been injured by drivers not breaking any laws.

Jamie, of Staines, Middlesex, was playing near his home when he was hit by a car driven by Ricky Darbon, 28, two years ago.

He was left paralysed and able to speak only a few words.

Simon John, the solicitor representing the family, claimed that even though Mr Darbon was within the speed limit he was still negligent and should have slowed down when driving along a narrow road with cars parked on either side.

Mr John said: "We took the view that the 30 miles per hour speed limit was too fast for that area and that the driver should have been obeying his instincts to drive slower.

"There is real hope now for other children injured in similar circumstances, and if a number of claims are successful insurers may begin to put pressure on the Government to impose 20 mph speed limits in appropriate areas in towns and cities."

Mr John added that he had written to the roads minister, Baroness Hayman, urging that a lower speed limit be applied in certain areas.

Local authorities at present must apply to the Department of Transport if they wish to impose 20 mph limits.

A spokesman for the Department of Transport said: "There's a general review of road safety and there are very high profile campaigns to reduce speed.

"The introduction of 20 mph limits is very much a matter for local authorities. Once they apply to us, each case is assessed on its own merits."

A spokeswoman for the Association of British Insurers said: "Even if drivers are within the speed limit it does mean they are not negligent. If you are driving past a school, for example, and the limit is 30 mph then drivers should use their common sense. Safe driving does not mean that all you have to do is keep within the speed limit."

Ozone-friendly cooling agents 'can cause serious liver damage'

CHEMICALS used as a substitute for chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) — which destroy the earth's ozone layer — can cause serious liver disease, researchers said yesterday. The chemicals are used in air conditioning units and cleaning agents.

The warning followed the case of nine workers in a metal smelting depot who were accidentally exposed to air conditioning refrigerant gas. All went on to suffer liver damage, one of them severely. The refrigerant, a mixture of two hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) known as 123 and 124, is widely used in industrial air conditioning.

The scientists reported in a paper published in the Lancet medical journal yesterday: "Repeated exposure of human beings to HCFCs 123 and 124 can result in serious liver injury in a high proportion of the exposed population ... Safer alternatives should be developed urgently."

A different type of HCFC, called R134A, is used in domestic refrigerators. There is no suggestion that this chemical is harmful.

The British Institute of Refrigeration, which represents the industry, said: "These substances are being phased out and replaced with various other refrigerants."

The research was by Perrine Hoet from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, with help from chemists in Maryland and Washington state in the US.

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Trust told to rethink hunting ban

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

A HIGH Court judge yesterday called on the National Trust to reconsider its ban on deer hunting, but stopped short of granting an injunction forcing it to do so.

Mr Justice Walker said it seemed there had been a serious error of judgment about the speed and secrecy with which the decision was made without consulting the huntsmen concerned.

After a three day hearing he gave the Devon and Somerset Staghounds and the Quantock Staghounds leave for a full judicial review of the trust's decision not to grant hunting licences over its land on the grounds that hunting was cruel.

But he hoped the trust would save the court time and everyone money by reconsidering its decision and giving the huntsmen a fair hearing. The trust said in a statement it would "give very serious consideration to the judge's suggestion that its council should discuss the subject again".

The hunts said they would continue to pursue the trust through the courts if they were not given an opportunity to put their case to the council.

The judge ruled that the huntsmen did have an arguable "but not a strong" case that the ban was flawed because the trust council had appeared to bow to media pressure in reaching a fast decision.

It was taken the day after the publication of a report commissioned from Cambridge zoologist Patrick Bateson which called deer hunting with hounds an exceptionally cruel sport.

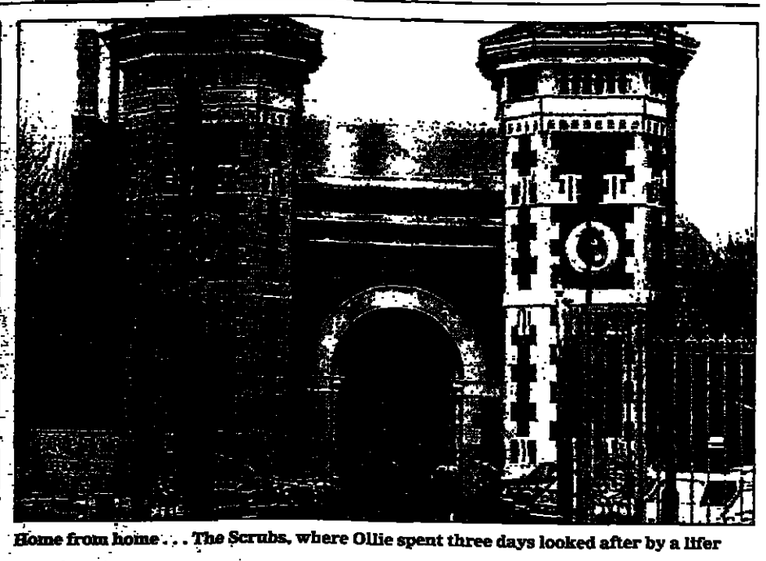
Judge Walker said that the council had preferred speed to further consultation and discussion before making the decision to ban hunting. He said he did not have to decide whether the court would have reached the same decision as the trust or whether that decision was right.

The question a full trial would have to answer was whether that decision was lawful and valid and should be given effect.

The trust owns a strategic parcel of land in the Quantock Hills of Somerset and one tenth of the Exmoor National Park in Devon, and any ban on hunting with hounds would have a serious affect on the Devon and Somerset Staghounds and the Quantock Staghounds.

The judge called on the trust to reconvene and reconsider its decision, taking into account what had happened since the ban on April 10, including the observations of the huntsmen and tenant farmers recorded since the present hearing began on Monday.

Home at last . . . Ollie greets owner Dot Oliver after his spell in jail PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GILES



Home from home . . . The Scrubs, where Ollie spent three days looked after by a lifer

Flyaway parrot Ollie does bird in Scrubs

Vivek Chaudhary

FOR three days he was Britain's most wanted parrot, a fugitive who had launched his escape bid from atop a bald head.

But as Dot Oliver, aged 44, searched in vain for Ollie, little did she realise that her runaway pet had been caged by a jail bird barely three miles away.

After a flying exit from his home in Barnes in south-west London, Ollie enjoyed his liberty for a couple of hours before resting his feathers. Unfortunately for him, he chose to alight in the cell of a prisoner serving life for murder in E-wing of Wormwood Scrubs in west London.

After entering through a light shaft, he looked around his new cage and said to his fellow occupant: "Hello, I love you." Luckily for Ollie, the prisoner is the Birdman of Wormwood Scrubs and keeps four budgies in his cell.

"He did a very good job, feeding Ollie with chocolate biscuits and giving him lots of water. He even allowed him to sleep on the floor of his cell. But Ollie's a lot fatter after his time in prison, and I might have to put him on a diet," said Ms Oliver, who is a legal secretary. She has owned Ollie, an African Grey worth £700, for three years and describes him as "really cheeky". He fled his home when a kitchen door was left open but alighted on top of Ms Oliver's father-in-law's bald head. She said: "He screamed as one of Ollie's claws cut his head, and Ollie flew off. I was so upset, I thought I'd never see him again."

She alerted the police and RSPCA, and put up "wanted" posters offering a reward of £100 for information leading to Ollie's capture. The fugitive was eventually traced when prison authorities found a ring on Ollie's leg naming his owner, and contacted the RSPCA. Ms Oliver said: "When I went to collect him he just said 'I love you,' and he gave me a big kiss. He's a very talkative parrot who is a loving member of the family. He likes television and when I got him home I gave him his favourite food — chicken curry and chips."

She is grateful to his temporary warder, and has promised to send him photographs of Ollie. She has also pledged her support for an aviary at Wormwood Scrubs that the prisoners are trying to raise money for.

> 'When I went to collect him he just said I love you, and gave me a big kiss'

Ollie can also say "hello darling, give us a kiss" and always says "see you later Dot" when she leaves home. Fortunately for the prisoners, Ollie did not give them a chorus of his favourite noise. "He loves doing a police siren," said Ms Oliver. "But the next phrase that I want to teach him is 'stay at home'."

Meekness may help the heart

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

IT IS arguable whether the meek will inherit the earth, but scientists today provide a more concrete benefit of meekness, at least for women: less need of coronary care units.

Martha Whiteman and colleagues at Edinburgh university have suggested in the Lancet that submissive women are less likely to get heart disease than their more pushy sisters.

They found that meekness offered men relatively little protection from diseases, but in women it appeared to cut the risk by a third.

They followed 809 men and 783 women aged 55 to 74 for five years in a study funded by the British Heart Foundation. The volunteers were given a battery of physical and psychological tests, including personality assessments.

Over the period about 10 per cent of the men and 4.5 per cent of the women had heart attacks, but the most submissive women according to the personality scores — those preferring to stay in the background or who lacked confidence — had a 31 per cent lower risk of having an attack.

Measurement of known physical risk factors, such as raised blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking, were crucial to assessing the risk of heart disease, but "personality factors may help to improve our prediction of who is at risk of a cardiac event", the researchers said.

Dr Whiteman said studies had suggested that among people who were forced to be submissive at work the risk of heart disease could be higher than among those who were meek by temperament.

"The people who score highly on the submissiveness scale are content to be that way. They have not been forced to submit to anyone."

She added: "Heart disease has many contributing factors, so people need not worry if they can't be described as submissive. What our findings do indicate is that the effect of personality traits on heart disease warrants further attention."

Studies of men in the US have found a 37 per cent reduced risk of death in those described as placid, compared with those who are socially dominant or hostile.

There has been considerable interest in the concept of a "type A" personality — highly competitive and time-driven — being more at risk of heart disease, but recent findings suggest hostility and anger are the real risk factors.

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£2,500 to £4,999	5.25%	5.35%	4.20%	4.26%
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Where is Edinburgh's ethnic range?

Blacks a missing force in arts festival says US writer

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

THE American actress and writer Marsha Hunt yesterday criticised the paucity of black performers and artists at the Edinburgh Festival. Speaking in the city at the presentation of the Saga prize for unpublished black British novelists, Hunt said the responsibility lay not only with festival programmers but also with black groups themselves.

"What worries me as a black person is that this city at festival time does not reflect who we are and how much we contribute to this country," she said.

Hunt highlighted the contrast between Edinburgh and the "other" festival in Britain this weekend, the Notting Hill Carnival. "If you live on the fringes of Notting Hill and look out of your window this weekend you would think that the entire population was black. How can Edinburgh miss that? How can Edinburgh and the carnival, when they are so close in time, miss this opportunity for exploitation between themselves? Even if there was a mini-carnival in Edinburgh it would help bridge the gap."

Hunt, an American resident in Dublin, said she owed her career as a writer to the diversity of British culture. "I'm a foreign writer, but the opportunity for me to write was given to me in Britain. Britain enhances, embraces and incorporates probably more cultures than any other nation except the United States."

However, the representation of ethnic minorities in the festival was limited. "We have things like the Commission for Racial Equality and the arts councils. Are they encouraging these people to come to Edinburgh? There's a lack of information and understanding."

She added: "This is an incredibly sophisticated and welcoming place. I don't think there is an element of racism that is keeping black Britain out of the festival."

Hunt called for initiatives such as the Saga prize to encourage performers from ethnic minorities to come to the festival.

"With publishing there was a need for an initiative and if that was not coming from the publishing world there was a need to create it."

The prize, set up in 1994, was designed to last for only four years. "As soon as publishers sense there is a market, they will do it themselves," she said. "When a manuscript comes in from a first-time black writer they will look at it a little harder." Joanna Traynor's novel Sister Josephine, the winner of this year's Saga prize, has been published by Bloomsbury.

A spokeswoman for the Fringe Festival accepted that ethnic minorities were under-represented, but pointed out that the fringe was not programmed. "There is no question that in terms of the breakdown of backgrounds in this country the festival is unrepresentative," Faith Liddell said. "We have no control over who comes. Anything on the Fringe takes initiative, and every initiative has taken a person or a team of people to make it happen."

Marsha Hunt: 'Edinburgh at festival time does not reflect who we are and how much we contribute to this country' PHOTOGRAPH: DOUGLAS ROBERTSON

Ministers plan review of asylum

James Meikle
Community Affairs Editor

THE Government launched a root and branch review of the assessment of asylum seekers yesterday after the previous day's riot at a detention centre.

Mike O'Brien, the immigration minister, admitted the backlog of more than 52,000 cases was "unacceptably high" but dismissed claims from within his service that more than 40,000 asylum seekers had "vanished" into the community in recent years.

A leading member of the Immigration Service Union, which claims about 2,200 members, suggested asylum seekers should be held in reception centres where assessments could be made in weeks rather than the years which are commonplace.

Only a small proportion are held in centres such as Campsfield House, near Kidlington, Oxfordshire, where detainees were involved in the fifth riot in recent months. Mr O'Brien, who went there yesterday to inspect the damage, put at £100,000 by the Home Office, said the entire system, including accommodation and state support, would be investigated in an interdepartmental review this autumn.

Asylum seekers who did not apply on entry lost benefits under the last government, but local authorities are running up huge bills in housing and feeding them.

John Tincey, research director for the union, said only a quarter of 234,400 applicants between 1989 and 1996 were given asylum or exceptional leave to remain.

He suggested setting up new secure centres, where there would be medical reports, lawyers, counsellors, and even appeal courts. "Genuine asylum seekers are interested in protection, not, in the short term, in how much money they have or where they live," he said.

Such a system would deter economic migrants.

Rachel Rees, of the Refugee Council, agreed the system was not working but said: "The proposals to set up what would be detention centres by any other name would be equally inhumane. The solution has to make the process fair, effective and efficient."

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants accused the Immigration Service Union of exaggerating the scale of the problem.

Mark Steel, page 13

Warnings of tailbacks and congestion add up to bank holiday woes for most drivers

Sarah Hall

THE August bank holiday exodus was under way last night amid warnings that drivers faced delays.

As the first of about 5 million travellers tried to beat the rush, motoring organisations predicted 15-mile tailbacks and severe congestion.

The Highways Agency urged motorists to avoid the M5 near Bristol from noon today, on Saturday morning, and on Sunday and Monday from 1pm until 8pm. But a spokesman conceded: "There are no easy ways to bypass Bristol for motorists travelling down the country."

As the first of 3 million holidaymakers fled to the coast and the West Country — with a further 1.75 million heading abroad — RAC spokeswoman Judith Cashman said: "Anyone travelling this weekend, whether to the coast, out-of-town shopping centres or theme parks, will have to allow a lot more time. If drivers know they are going on congested routes they have to be prepared to divert."

The AA urged motorists to plan their route, take snacks and drinks in case of delays and make basic checks on their vehicles before setting out. Spokesman Matthew Sparks said: "We often find engines overheat when people are stuck in queues, and this causes a knock-on effect for the rest of the traffic."

Trouble spots include all routes to the West Country, particularly the M5 at junctions 18 and 19, where the average traffic flow tops 130,000 vehicles a day at peak summer times; the A303 westbound through Wiltshire; and the M6 around Birmingham.

Routes to Heathrow and Gatwick will also see delays. The M25 has roadworks between junctions 8 and 10.

Even at their destination drivers could find hold-ups. Traffic on coastal roads will move slowly all weekend.

"You might as well stay at home," said Ms Cashman.

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Partisans spark controversy

Italian resistance heroes feel heat

John Hooper in Rome

IT WAS 11.45pm on a Wednesday earlier this month when a call arrived at the Rome offices of the Ansa news agency. "Go to the front of the Ardeatine Caves," said a man's voice. "There's a nice little present there for Bentivegna and Capponi."

At the entrance to the caves, on the outskirts of the capital, the agency's reporter found two cardboard cut-out figures dangling from an acacia tree. One was dressed in a man's jacket; the other in a woman's apron. Both had nooses round their necks.

What made this macabre stunt all the more bizarre was that it was directed at two elderly people for something they did 53 years ago. Rosario Bentivegna and Carla Capponi were partisans during the second world war, but the activities of Italy's anti-fascist guerrillas are as topical today as at any time since they laid down their weapons.

They are being picked over in two high-profile legal actions, and inter-partisan rivalry provides the plot for an intensely controversial film to be shown at the Venice Film Festival, which opens next Wednesday.

Both the legal actions go back to the afternoon of March 23 1944.

Shortly before four o'clock, Mr Bentivegna, dressed as a street cleaner, was sweeping Via Rasella in the centre of Rome, and puffing his pipe. From down the road he could hear the tramp of boots. A detachment of the SS was crossing the Via del Tritone, as it did every afternoon, on its way back to barracks.

When the 156-strong column swung into Via Rasella, Mr Bentivegna wandered over to his cart and, pretending to tap out his pipe, lit a fuse that led to a 40lb bomb. Then, as casually as he could, he hurried from the street to join Ms Capponi, standing watch a few hundred yards away.

The explosion was heard throughout the centre of occupied Rome. It took the lives of 33 Germans and two Italian civilians. An enraged Hitler ordered a reprisal that would "shake the world". Next morning 355 men and boys were shot dead in the Ardeatine Caves: Italy's most infamous wartime atrocity.

For more than two years now the world has watched with mounting astonishment as Erich Priebke, aged 84, who took part in the massacre as an SS officer, was extradited to Italy, tried, found guilty but not convictable, retried and finally, last month, sentenced to five years in prison.

Yet surprisingly little attention has been focused on the more remarkable fact that Mr Bentivegna, Ms Capponi and a third former Communist partisan involved in the Via Rasella attack may themselves be put on trial.

> A case has been brought against the Via Rasella bombers by two victims' relatives

A case has been brought against them by relatives of two of the Italian victims of the events in Rome 53 years ago: one who died in the Via Rasella blast, and another who was executed in reprisal.

The prosecutor assigned to the case recommended no action, but in June a Rome judge ordered him to reopen his investigation. Outraging many on the left, Maurizio Pacioni ruled that the lawyer for the victims' relatives had made a prima facie case that the Via Rasella bombing was an "illegitimate act of war".

Thirteen days after the bombing, King Vittorio Emmanuele III granted an amnesty covering "all those crimes of which the aim was to free the fatherland of German occupation". But neo-fascist intellectuals, some revisionist historians and, most recently, Judge Pacioni have argued that the true aim of the partisans who planted the bomb may have been to prompt reprisals against rival, non-Communist partisan groups, in particular the Trotskyist Bandiera Rossa.

The issue of inter-partisan rivalry is at the heart of Porzus, the second feature film by the Milanese director Renzo Martinelli. A son of partisan parents, Mr Martinelli became fascinated by one of the ugliest incidents of the war in Italy.

In February 1945 Communist guerrillas ambushed 21 members of the so-called Osoppo division in an area of high alpine pasture called Porzus, near the border with what was then Yugoslavia.

The Osoppo division was also a partisan movement, but it had been founded by priests, and its members — liberals, republicans and Christian Democrats in the main — wore a green bandana specifically to distinguish themselves from the "reds".

In the eyes of the Communists, however, what damned the Osoppo division was its members' resolute opposition to Tito's plans for annexing that part of north-eastern Italy to Yugoslavia.

Only one of the 21 captured guerrillas managed to escape from Porzus. Three were tortured, then killed. The remaining 17 were shot later. Among them was the brother of the film-maker Pier Paolo Pasolini.

More even than the bombing of Via Rasella, the attack on the "greens" of the Osoppo division is a living cause. Mr Martinelli has said that he was unable to film his story in the province where it unfolded because nine local councils refused him permission.

Unlike Mr Bentivegna and his comrades, the "gappista" who ordered the Porzus massacre was not amnestied. Mario Toffanin was given a life sentence in 1952, but fled to Yugoslavia. He was pardoned by President Sandro Pertini in 1978, but seems never to have returned to his homeland.

Earlier this month he was traced to a house in Slovenia, just over a mile from the Italian border, where he was living on a £240 a month pension from the Italian state.

A scene from the film Porzus depicts the execution of rival partisans, including the brother of Pier Paolo Pasolini, by Italian Communists in February 1945

Rosario Bentivegna: His bomb killed 33 SS troops and sparked mass reprisal

Row sinks hope for hostages

James Meek in Moscow

A FIERCE controversy over huge ransom payments to the kidnappers of foreigners in the separatist republic of Chechenia has dampened expectations of the imminent release of European hostages held there, including the Britons Jon James and Camilla Carr.

Accusations that senior Chechen officials were involved in a kidnap racket and that hostages had been ransomed for huge sums burst into the open this week when the employers of five Russian hostages announced that they had paid for their release.

On Wednesday night NTV television showed pictures of a $2 million (£1.3 million) ransom being counted — the amount it paid Chechen kidnappers for the release of three of its journalists.

President Boris Yeltsin has criticised the company's owners for publicising the payments, accusing them of jeopardising the fragile trust he had established with Aslan Maskhadov, the leader of Chechenia, against which Russia waged war between 1994 and 1996.

"We have not said and cannot say everything about how our journalists were released, although we know how it worked in detail," Mr Yeltsin said.

A key figure in the hostage release talks, the security council deputy secretary Boris Berezovsky, also said that ransoms had been paid. He would not name the sums involved.

The most damaging claims were made by the NTV chief, Igor Malashenko, who dismissed Chechen claims that a special anti-kidnapping unit set up by Mr Maskhadov had located the hostages and and obtained their release without violence or a ransom payment.

It was the head of this unit, Magomed Magomadov, who told Interfax news agency this week that he knew where the Britons' kidnappers were.

Mr Malashenko said the Chechen leader knew his deputies were organising the kidnapping racket and was either turning a blind eye or was too weak to do anything about it.

Efforts to free the Britons are being led by Chris Hunter, who set up the charity for which they worked, and British embassy officials. Nothing has been heard from the kidnappers since the couple were seized in July.

The German authorities have received a ransom demand for $3.5 million dollars from the kidnappers of a German businessman seized from the airport in neighbouring Ingushetia earlier this month.

Only the Quaker movement and a few small European grant-giving bodies stand behind Jon James and Camilla Carr. A source close to the British government said London would stick to its policy of not paying ransoms for the release of nationals.

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> BRITAIN'S BIGGEST CHAIN

The Guardian Friday August 22 1997

Pope feeds abortion debate in Paris visit

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

WITH most of France's fervent papal dissenters away on holiday, the Pope received a triumphant greeting yesterday from more than 300,000 flag-waving and cheering faithful beneath the Eiffel Tower as he began a four-day visit marred only by a spat with gays and a show of strength by campaigners against abortion.

After a drive around the Champ-de-Mars, the 77-year-old pontiff told delegates to the Roman Catholic Church's 12th World Youth Days festival that his visit was the latest step in a "grand journey" to revive religion among the young.

Defying the protocol governing France's constitutional separation of church and state, President Jacques Chirac received the Pope at the Elysée palace.

He told the Pope: "For many of today's youth, who are waiting for answers, you are a guide and a reference."

Earlier yesterday, and on Wednesday, the police dispersed protesters wearing World Youth Days T-shirts and calling themselves "survivors of abortion" who had forced their way into two Paris hospitals.

Today the Pope will add to the abortion controversy by a private visit to the grave near Paris of Jerôme Lejeune, a genetics professor who is a hero to anti-abortionists. Abortion has been legal in France for 22 years.

The only large protest against the Pope's sixth visit to mainland France will be a demonstration tomorrow morning in the 18th district of Paris by gays and lesbians, feminists and groups representing the poor.

An ecologist group called Chiche! (I dare you) has promised to hand out "holy condoms". It said it was adding the condoms to an already long list of merchandise available for the four-day papal visit "to liven up the participants' long nights of prayer".

Chiche! said its campaign was to educate young people about the benefits of using condoms to guard against Aids.

A poll of 1,000 people for the weekly L'Evenement du Jeudi showed that 59 per cent rated the Pope "conservative" or "retrograde".

Another poll for the Catholic daily La Croix found that 65 per cent of French young people said religion had little or no importance in their lives.

The World Youth Days festival, held in alternate years in different cities — most recently Manila and Denver — is a week of religious events, morning prayers, musical performances and workshops on Third World development.

The greeting the Pope received yesterday was impressive by Western standards — although it could not rival the 4 million who took part in the Manila World Youth Days — and the protests were minimal compared to those during his last visit to France, in September.

Young people help the Pope as he reads a prayer in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower yesterday at the start of his four-day visit PHOTOGRAPH: JEROME DELAY

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Judge tells of beating by Karadzic thugs

Jovan Kovacic in Banja Luka

A BOSNIAN Serb judge gave a harrowing account yesterday of his ing and intimidation at gunpoint by nationalist hardliners who demanded that he find in their favour.

"I still don't feel well after the shock I have suffered," Jovo Rosic, a constitutional court judge, told reporters.

He said he was threatened with murder and beaten senseless last week by two men who ordered him to rule against the decision by the Bosnian Serb president, Biljana Plavsic, to dissolve the parliament in Pale which supports her bitter rival, the former president and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic, and to call early elections.

With Mr Rosic and another judge absent, the five remaining judges voted 4-1 against Ms Plavsic's decision the following day.

Mr Rosic, who spent several days in hospital, was speaking for the first time about his beating.

Hardline nationalists led by Mr Karadzic pushed through the court ruling as part of their power struggle against President Plavsic. She has accused her wartime associates of smuggling and of damaging Serb interests by blocking peacemaking efforts.

Last month she dissolved the Bosnian Serb parliament, which is loyal to Mr Karadzic and his top aide, Momclo Krajisnik, after her opponents rejected her demand for the suspension of another staunch Karadzic loyalist, the interior minister Dragan Kijac.

, Western states refused to accept the constitutional court ruling against Ms Plavsic, and the United States said it had evidence of pressure on and intimidation of the judges.

Mr Rosic said: "Around two o'clock in the morning I was woken up by knocking on my door. I recognised the voice of Gevero, a waiter from the hotel, who said he had a message from Krajisnik."

Mr Rosic said he had stayed at the Hotel Bistrica on Mount Jahorina for three years while serving as justice minister, and had often received messages from Mr Krajisnik, who was then the Speaker of parliament.

"Believing nothing was out of the ordinary, I opened the door, and two young men I had never seen before entered my room. The waiter took off down the corridor. Without a word the men threw me on my bed, took out their guns and both put gun barrels to my temple."

"You will not vote for the decision by that whore from Banja Luka," Mr Rosic quoted one as saying.

"Fearing for my life, I said I wouldn't," Mr Rosic said. The judge said one of the men then told him he would be

'The men threw me on my bed and put gun barrels to my temple'

"liquidated" if he did not keep his word..

"Then blows started raining on my legs and buttocks, I lost consciousness. I don't know when the men left my room."

Mr Rosic said he had medical documents verifying his account.

International human rights workers said Mr Rosic's testimony was credible and underscored the lengths to which Mr Karadzic's hardliners were prepared to go to get their way.

The judge said he felt compelled to make a public statement to respond to Mr Krajisnik's denial of the beating, which described Mr Rosic as "their man".

"I'm not theirs. I'm a man who serves his people. I judge by my conscience and by the law," Mr Rosic said. He refused to take any questions. — Reuter.

Albanian leader boosts security

Jonathan Steele

FOREIGN advisers have started to trickle back into Albania to try to restore its defunct security system.

Nato officials have held talks with the new government's defence chiefs about reforming the armed forces. Italy and Greece are planning to send up to 600 troops to guard ports and border crossings, while the Western European Union has said it will help to re-train the police.

The teams of specialists replace the Italian-led multinational force of 7,000 which left last week, having done little more than keep roads open in the run-up to the June polls. It made no arrests.

Although security remains precarious on most roads and in several southern cities, the new government under the Socialist leader Fatos Nano has had some unexpected success in its first weeks.

Police units have arrested 34 gangsters in Vlore, one of the most lawless southern towns, and have broken up gangs elsewhere.

The new foreign presence is being kept low-key at Mr Nano's request. Before his landslide electoral victory he described the multinational force as an affront to Albanian pride and proof that the then president, Sali Berisha, had failed.

The force was sent after Albania sank into an orgy of looting and lawlessness when pyramid investment schemes collapsed.

The new foreign advisers will help the government to weed out Mr Berisha's secret police, the Shik, and reshuffle army and police commands.

The government's electoral base is strongest in the south, where law and order collapsed most dramatically in March. And despite its initial successes, highway robberies and turf wars are rife.

On Monday six people were shot driving through a southern village. Another six were killed during a shootout near Tirana last week.

هكذا من الأصل

News in brief

Slavic squabble threatens union

BELARUS and Russia clashed yesterday over Minsk's detention of two Russian television teams, increasing tension between the neighbouring countries.

At stake is not just the journalists' fate but the future of a new treaty linking the Russian Federation with Belarus. Russia's presidential spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, told the Mayak radio station yesterday that relations would suffer if the journalists were not freed by the end of the day.

But the Belarussian president, Alexander Lukashenko, said he would not tolerate blackmail and demanded an apology.

One of the Russian crews was detained last month while crossing the Belarus-Lithuania border. The second crew was held after trying to repeat the action. — *Reuter, Minsk.*

Turkish police in court

SEVEN Turkish police officers charged with beating a reporter to death were brought to court yesterday for the first time since the trial opened a year ago.

Eleven policemen have been charged in connection with killing in January 1996 of Metin Goktepe, a reporter for thenow defunct leftwing daily Evrensel. Two of them remain at large. Two others did not appear in court in Afyon, 270 miles south-west of Istanbul, citing health problems.

The case is seen as a test of of Turkey's promise to improve press freedom. Goktepe, aged 27, was detained in January 1996 while covering the funeral of leftwing militants in Istanbul.

His body was found in a park the next day. The police claimed that he died after falling and hitting his head. — *AP, Ankara.*

Strike hits gold fields

SOUTH AFRICA'S trade union federation, Cosatu, ended four days of rolling protests against proposed labour legislation with a 24-hour strike yesterday in the industrial and mining area centred on Johannesburg.

About 10,000 striking workers marched through the centre of the city to press for better minimum working conditions, their action hitting the region's gold and platinum mines hard. Few buses ran and train services were curtailed.

The basic conditions of employment bill is due to be debated in parliament on September 15. Cosatu is pressing for a maximum 40-hour work week within five years, six months of maternity leave, and higher overtime rates. Business backs the government's proposals for a maximum working week of 45 hours and four months of maternity leave. — *Reuter, Johannesburg.*

'Pig poster' woman freed

AN ISRAELI woman whose posters portraying the Prophet Mohammed as a pig caused an outcry among Muslims two months ago was released from prison yesterday to house arrest, a court spokesman said.

A court in Jerusalem handed Tatyana Suskin, aged 26, over to an aunt in return for a guarantee that she would remain at her house.

Ms Suskin received the court's permission yesterday to undergo tests by psychiatrists in the next two weeks. Last week the court ruled that she was fit to stand trial.

Shortly after her arrest for the June 27 incident, Ms Suskin said she had no regrets about putting up the posters in the Palestinian-ruled side of Hebron.

She is accused of committing a racist act, harming religious sensitivities, supporting a terrorist group and endangering life by stoning an Arab car. — *Reuter, Jerusalem.*

Calcutta arms trial adjourned

THE trial of Peter Bleach, a British arms dealer accused of supplying weapons to a militant Hindu sect, was adjourned by a Calcutta court yesterday until September 11.

The decision followed a legal challenge by his co-defendants, five Latvian crew members of the Russian plane which dropped weapons and ammunition over West Bengal in December 1995.

Mr Bleach, aged 45, is charged with "abetting the waging of war with India", an offence which carries the death penalty. — *Richard Norton-Taylor.*

Montserrat's Jerry Garcia stamp, left, and an Albert Hall concert next month starring Eric Clapton and Sting, will raise funds to aid volcano victims. The Grateful Dead star is also alive and well on stamps from Tanzania, right, the Central African Republic and Niger — one of a number of rock musicians featured on Third World "entertainment stamps"

Striking a chord with fire mountain

Montserrat should be grateful to the late Jerry Garcia, writes **Ed Vulliamy** in Washington

THE last letter that many citizens of Montserrat may post from their island will feature the bespectacled grin of the composer of a song called Fire on the Mountain — Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead.

Of all the things that people living under the volcano have to think about today, the issue of brightly-coloured stamps portraying Garcia, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Elvis Presley would seem the least.

But the issue is going ahead, not least because it opens the door to an extraordinary charity operation set up to help victims of the volcano.

Starring the Beatles' producer, Sir George Martin, and an American stamp dealer, it also affords a peep at a remarkable world market in stamps in which people from remote villages in Tanzania and the deserts of Mongolia post letters adorned with Bob Dylan and John Lee Hooker.

Don Palazzo of the Westminster Stamp Gallery of Foxboro, Massachusetts, had two hobbies when he was eight, drumming and stamp collecting. "I was either going to be a rock musician or a stamp dealer and now I've combined the two," he said yesterday.

His company is the youngest and smallest of a little group of agencies — Mr Palazzo calls it "largely a cartel" — who arrange for mainly Third World countries to raise revenue by issuing "entertainment stamps" for sale to collectors in the West as well as for local postage.

Mr Palazzo is now turning the business into a relief operation. "I'm a stamp dealer who deals in cats and dogs and fish, and as such I'll make money. But when it comes to Jerry Garcia and Jimi Hendrix, I'm not going to make money. I'm going to help music and people."

In the case of Montserrat, he joined forces with the families and estates of the four dead musicians, the British-based Young Persons Concert Foundation, and Sir George Martin to arrange the stamp issue and a concert at the Albert Hall next month featuring Eric Clapton and Sting.

The connection to Montserrat is a direct one: Sir George owns the famous AIR studios on the island, at which the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton and others recorded.

"We can't put them on the stamps," Mr Palazzo said, "because no living person other than the Queen can be represented on a Crown dependency. But we can put the faces of those who influenced them."

The proceeds from the stamps and the concert will go to help volcano victims. But the islanders are not the only people to have Garcia and his like crossing the counters of dusty post offices.

One of the biggest agencies is the Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corporation of New York, which is responsible for such issues as Micronesia's Elvis series and The Gambia's Bob Dylan editions.

Its director, Danny Keren, laments the decline of stamp-collecting as "part of the decline in reading, and having time for thoughtful hobbies, away from all the couch-potato distractions of TV and computer screens".

Islanders to get financial aid

Richard Norton-Taylor

PEOPLE fleeing Montserrat will be given short-term financial help under a package of emergency aid announced yesterday by the Government. But the aid falls far short of what was requested by officials of the volcano-threatened Caribbean colony.

The islanders will be offered assistance to resettle in other Caribbean countries, and those who want to come to Britain will be helped with their air fares, depending on their financial situation.

Financial support will consist of £2,400 over six months — the average income of the islanders for that period — for people aged over 18, and £600 for under 18s. Air fares to countries in the region will also be paid.

Islanders will not be eligible for the scheme if they have savings, or assets outside the island of more than £10,000. Those coming to Britain will be eligible for "normal" British benefits for two years.

The help will be available to islanders who were living in Montserrat on August 16, when scientists confirmed that there was a greater risk from the volcano than hitherto expected and people were urged to leave previously safe areas.

Those who left the island before this date but found themselves in hardship will be able to apply for help under a separate scheme, the details of which are still to be announced.

Montserrat officials have said Britain should give heads of households the equivalent of £9,866 a second parent £6,940, and children £4,625.

Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, said Britain would also provide help to Antigua, where 4,000 people from Montserrat have settled since 1995, when the volcano on the Soufriere Hills began erupting.

Ronald Sanders, Antigua's high commissioner in Britain, said yesterday that his country could not accommodate any more people without help. "I have written to [Clare Short] and said that the situation is now dire and requires urgent attention," he said.

The Foreign Office said it was reacting as quickly as it could.

"The last thing we want to do is create problems on Antigua and Guadeloupe," a spokesman said.

Criticism in Montserrat of Britain's lack of help and the delay in annoncing an aid package has been increasing this week. Islanders staged a further demonstration outside the governor's residence on Wednesday.

About 4,000 people remain in the northern part of Montserrat. Last weekend scientists suggested that the volcano could threaten the whole island and the danger zone was extended to cover the central area. The future of the island remains uncertain.

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Crack maths test fails to do the trick

Joanna Coles in New York

IT IS something every maths teacher wrestles with, and Scott Martin, of Elsie Roberts High School in Dallas, thought he had found the solution. His task was to introduce mental arithmetic to a class of streetwise adolescents, so he made the questions relevant to their lives.

For example: "Hector has knocked up six girls in his gang. There are 27 girls in the gang. What percentage of the girls in the gang has Hector knocked up?"

Yesterday Mr Martin and five colleagues were working out how to manage without two months' pay, after they were suspended for 60 days because of protests by parents.

"I was sick to my stomach," said Sandy Trojacek, whose daughter Kelly attends the school. "I was at church when I saw the test and I was just sick."

She singled out a question about prostitution as wholly inappropriate. "Rufus is pimping for three girls. If the price is $65 for each trick, how many tricks will each girl have to turn so Rufus can pay for his $800 a day crack habit?"

"They should never have used this test," the headmaster, Dwain Dawson, said. "It was a poor professional decision and it's unacceptable."

He told angry parents that the teachers had not compiled the test maliciously.

The questions, given to 100 pupils as part of their holiday homework, upset pupils and parents alike with their references to drugs. Connie Fowler, the school librarian, said most of the staff were appalled by the questions referring to drugs.

One question asked: "Jerome wants to cut his half-pound of heroin to make 20 per cent more profit. How many ounces of cut will be needed?"

The six suspended maths teachers are to be replaced temporarily by junior school teachers who will be paid £23 for teaching a 90-minute class.

Mr Martin said the test was intended to be an "ice-breaker, a way of letting the kids know we have a sense of humour and a sense of what goes on in their world".

College flaunts JFK theorists

Martin Walker in Washington

LEGAL action and campus protests are challenging the decision of a publicly-funded college in Orange County, California, to offer an academic course in conspiracy theories on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, including the claim that Israeli intelligence was behind it.

Four proponents of the most outlandish assassination theories are to give lectures. The course is being taught by Steven Frogue, the president of the board of trustees of the Orange County Community College. Mr Frogue claims that the presumed assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was working for a prominent Jewish organisation, the Anti-Defamation League.

To add balance, the talk-show host David Emory will also lecture on his theory that Kennedy was killed by undercover Nazis who escaped the ruins of Hitler's Reich in 1945.

"I know there is a lot of passion about this, but I believe colleges are places where people can have these kinds of special interests," said Robert Lombardi of the Orange County education department.

Michael Collins Piper, who writes for the anti-Semitic and rightwing journal the Spotlight, and claims that the Holocaust has been exaggerated, has been invited to lecture on his theory that Israel's secret service agency, Mossad, was behind the 1963 assassination.

"It was a joint enterprise, conducted at the highest levels of the CIA, in collaboration with organised crime, and most specifically with direct and profound involvement of Mossad," Mr Piper claimed yesterday.

Israel's motive, he went on, was the row between President Kennedy and the former Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion over "Kennedy's refusal to support Israel in its drive to build a nuclear weapon".

More conventional scholars of the assassination are outraged at the veneer of academic respectability which the course lends these outlandish theories.

"The harm is setting this in an educational environment where it has an official stamp of approval," said Gerald Posner, author of Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the assassination of JFK.

Haredi children study the Torah at Bible school in a suburb of Jerusalem, where the Haredim have a particularly strong presence PHOTOGRAPH: TOM STODDART

Orthodoxy enters Middle Eastern equation

Ultra-religious Haredim Jews are dividing Israel — literally, writes **Julian Borger** in Bnei Brak

ISRAEL'S remorseless demographic currents lapped up to the gates of Remez school this week in the shape of four sweaty men with skull-caps and tape-measures. Fuming, Ilana Tauber ran out to confront them in the playground.

They were unimpressed. They sauntered by the headmistress with smiles and nods. "We've come to divide your school," the foreman said.

It was spoken like a joke, but it was a precise description of their job. By order of Bnei Brak municipality, Remez school is to be divided in two by a high metal fence. One half is to be handed over to the suburb's rapidly expanding ultra-Orthodox, or Haredim, population.

The school's present 250 pupils, mostly children of secular parents, will be confined to the other half. Mrs Tauber's office will be moved to what is now a tool-shed.

Beneath a cardboard collage celebrating a century of Zionism, secular Israel confronted Orthodox Israel and lost.

"Nobody calls me," Mrs Tauber remonstrated. "It shows a terrible lack of consultation. How, then, are we supposed to live together?"

The workmen continued measuring the ground. The whole point of their task was that the two sides should not live together. The haredim do not like their kids to mix.

"The only way is to live apart," said Abraham Schvade, the most talkative of the fence-makers. "Otherwise, they will always fight. Here they'll fight for 2,000 years over whether you can open the refrigerator door on the Sabbath."

AllMrs Tauber had left was one bitter parting shot.

"Every break I'll play records full volume — I'll make life hell for them," she yelled at the workmen before retreating to her office.

The Haredim now make up 12 per cent of the Israeli population, and they have a much higher birth rate than secular Jews. In Bnei Brak, the secular have become a small minority. The streets of the Tel-Aviv suburb are dark with the black hats and frock coats of the male faithful. There is are also an unusual number of prams and pushchairs, propelled by women in long-sleeved dresses and bonnets.

Barry Rabinowitz, a 42-year-old in a black suit and fedora, sees nothing wrong with splitting Remez school. "We don't want our children open to outside influences, especially in the early years. The population of religious people is growing all the time, so I guess it's a good thing to do."

Segregated bus routes have also been proposed in Jerusalem, where the Haredim have a stronger hold. The number of children in Haredi schools has increased by 49 per cent in the past 4 years, while the secular school population grew by only 3 per cent.

Part of the explosive growth is due to birth rates. But Dov Elbaum, a journalist on the Yediot Aharanot newspaper, argues that a more important factor in the growth of Orthodoxy is the return to religion of young Jews, especially from poor families of Middle Eastern (Sephardic) origin, who form another 30 per cent of the population.

"The numbers are growing and growing every year and it's not going to stop," Mr Elbaum said. "Israel is going to become a very conservative, religious state in the next few years."

> 'Israel will become a very conservative, religious state in the next few years'

Liberals have tried to fight the threat of Orthodox influence, leading to ferocious spats. Fights broke out and cars were stoned when ultra-Orthodox Jews forcibly closed a busy Jerusalem thoroughfare on the Sabbath last year.

On two occasions this summer men and women who attempted to pray together — contrary to Orthodoxy — at Jerusalem's sacred Western Wall were spat at and denounced as "Nazis" by Haredi youths.

The buses look likely to become the new battleground. Yesterday, a group of women MPs promised to fight segregation.

As in Bnei Brak, the liberals are unlikely to win for the forseeable future. The ultra-Orthodox National Religious Party and the Sephardic-Orthodox Shas party threw their lot in with Binyamin Netanyahu's rightwing government last year.

In return, the Orthodox rabbinate has received state protection. Mr Netanyahu has backed a bill affirming the Orthodox monopoly in religious conversions. Last week a police raid on an Orthodox pirate radio station was reportedly abandoned under political pressure. Meanwhile Eli Suissa, the Shas interior minister, is believed to have intervened to push through the division of Remez school.

David Landau, a writer on religion for the Ha'aretz newspaper, argues that this alliance is the most momentous implication of the growth of Orthodoxy — and will affect the Israeli-Palestinian stand-off.

"The basic theological position [of Orthodox rabbis] was always doveish," he said. "Now the national xenophobic factor has insinuated itself. The Orthodox youth are being inculcated with rightwing ideology, providing a future electorate for Netanyahu."

The Labour opposition are evidently aware of the threat. On winning the leadership in June, Ehud Barak told the party that it has no hope of winning power if it cannot "open itself to the Orthodox".

At present that looks difficult. The signs are that rightwing politics and Orthodoxy are fusing. The youths who spat at praying women at the Western Wall went on a rampage in a Palestinian district that same June night, smashing cars and attacking passers-by. It was an ominous moment for the Middle East.

UN turns the screw on Unita

Mark Tran in New York

UNITA'S descent into pariah status quickened yesterday as *the United Nations* began discussing sanctions against Angola's rebel movement for its persistent refusal to comply with the 1994 Lusaka peace agreement.

Sanctions could be announced next week as soon as the Security Council decides on measures that will penalise Unita but not the rest of the country. The United States, Russia and Portugal are taking the lead in putting pressure on Jonas Savimbi, the Unita leader, to live up to the agreement. They had hoped to devise a sanctions package this week but became bogged down in the implications of the measures under consideration.

The US is concerned that closing Unita offices in London, Washington and elsewhere will make it difficult to communicate with Mr Savimbi, although analysts point out that he can be easily reached by satellite phone.

The Portuguese are concerned that a travel ban on Unita officials will also affect Angolan students in Portugal who are sometimes only loosely affiliated with the opposition group.

But UN diplomats see some form of sanctions as inevitable because of Mr Savimbi's foot-dragging.

According to a UN report last week, Unita has not fulfilled two key conditions of the Lusaka accord: returning the half of the country under its military control to the government and demobilising its army, estimated at 35,000 men.

"It is unacceptable that an agreement that took a lot of effort and cost a lot of money can be jeopardised by the will of one man," said Antonio *Monteiro, Portugal's ambassador* to the UN. "We have to start taking action, we can't accept any more postponements. It is a question the Unita leadership has to face."

While closing Unita's overseas offices and stopping its officials travelling may appear ineffectual against a guerrilla movement that has fought for 20 years, diplomats say that adding these sanctions to the existing arms embargo, will hurt the movement's credibility and increase its isolation.

Even the US has turned on its former cold war proxy. The Reagan administration used to treat Mr Savimbi like a visiting head of state and supplied him with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and other equipment in its war against the then-Soviet-backed Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA).

But last month the Clinton administration approved the sale of six American-made C-130 transport planes from Britain to the Angolan army and Angolan generals have visited Washington. "In the old days Mr Savimbi used us and we used him," a government source said. "Now he is an impediment to democracy and we are using any and all arrows in our quiver to move this peace process forward."

The US is also offering incentives to the Angolan military in an effort to dissuade impatient commanders from launching a full-scale offensive to defeat Unita.

Zimbabwe war veterans threaten to occupy farms

Emelia Sithole in Harare

ZIMBABWE'S guerrilla war veterans threatened yesterday to occupy white-owned farms if the government failed to give them land by next July. The threat was included in demands that representatives of the former fighters in the country's war for independence from Britain presented to President Robert Mugabe at a meeting.

The sitting was held to try to resolve a dispute over Mr Mugabe's suspension in March of a war victims' compensation fund.

Mugabe, himself a guerrilla leader in the struggle that led to independence in 1980, suspended the fund after allegations of fraud, including by some cabinet ministers.

The meeting, from which international reporters were barred, follows weeks of violent protests by the veterans aimed at forcing Mr Mugabe to resume compensation payments. — Reuter.

Mandela joins Cape Town race to host Olympics

David Beresford in Johannesburg

AS any middle-distance runner would attest, the best position going into the final bend is tucked just behind the leader. And Nelson Mandela seems to have seized that position as the final sprint begins in the race to beat Rome and secure the 2004 Olympic Games.

Early next month South Africa's president will be flying into Lausanne on board the "patriot plane" — a jumbo jet dressed up in the colours of the South African flag — to give moral support to Cape Town's bid to host the Games. But he will leave Lausanne a few hours before the International Olympic Committee announces who will host the event.

Mr Mandela's message is clear: Refuse us if you dare! He has seized on the Olympic logo to claim the Games for Africa, declaring that the five rings will not be "complete" until the Games are brought to the only continent, apart from Antarctica, never to have staged them. "For 27 years we dreamed the impossible dream," he said, linking of the issue with the struggle for racial equality in South Africa. "Now we have another dream: the Olympics, Cape Town in 2004 . . ."

South Africans are presenting the bid as an opportunity to kick-start the South African economy, in the wake of the apartheid and sanctions era.

A rare attack on the bid was published in the South African Labour Bulletin by two academics this week, denouncing it as a money-making scheme for big business which would bring little to disadvantaged communities. "Who recalls Montreal, Moscow and Seoul?" they asked. "Where are their long-term tourist booms? And what happened to their architectural statements?"

"It is a concern that all of us share," says the spokesman for the bid, Ameen Akhalwaya. "The whole challenge is how do you manage the process so as to ensure that it benefits those it is intended to benefit." To underline the point the bid alone — which has cost about £13 million — has been funded almost entirely by the private sector.

Another source of controversy is that the bid is led by Chris Ball, a former head of Barclay's Bank in South Africa. He went into exile in the 1980s after President P. W. Botha claimed he provided banking facilities for the then illegal ANC. He is now accused of being a white businessman posing as a representative of black Africa.

But the government's efforts to win Africa's support for the bid appear to be paying off. At least 30 countries, including Nigeria, have endorsed it, as has the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa.

But there is reason to doubt the capacity of Cape Town's infrastructure to support the Games. The city, for example, has only half the hotel accommodation offered by Rome for the 1960 Olympics.

Violence deals blow to Kenyan tourism

Owen Bowcott

POLITICAL violence in Kenya is threatening tourism, the country's second biggest foreign currency earner and biggest employer. Last year 770,000 visitors brought in nearly £300 million, attracted by game park safaris and lively beach resorts in what has long been regarded as the most stable state in East Africa.

A slump for the tourist industry would reinforce the political discontent facing the 73-year-old President Daniel arap Moi, who has come under pressure from student protesters and opposition politicians to introduce constitutional reforms.

On Wednesay, the MPs James Orengo and Norman Nyagah accused several ministers of organising vigilante gangs on the tourist coast, where violence and tribal clashes have claimed 39 lives in the past week.

Mr Moi told a rally this week that two opposition MPs had been arrested for travelling to Tanzania under false names,, saying: "These people and foreigners have been coming into the country to cause chaos. We know them by name and will take action."

The chairman of the tourist board, Peter Mbogua, said: "Unless we can now restore the confidence of the international travel industry the consequences will be disastrous. Twelve charters per week to Mombasa are likely to be cancelled and 150,000 jobs in the tourist industry are at risk."

The police have arrested more than 300 people. In the most recent incident, two men were lynched by villagers in Nt'ombeni, south of Mombasa. Among those being held is Omar Masumbuko, an activist in Mr Moi's Kenya African National Union party (Kanu). He was found with a pistol and 40 rounds of ammunition, sources said.

No tourists have been attacked, but local tour operators have reported more than 500 cancellations. On Tuesday, 350 tourists on a South African cruise ship sailed to Zanzibar instead of Mombasa, according to Najib Balala, chairman of the Mombasa and coast tourist association.

Singapore libel case 'flies in face of sense'

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Singapore

THE British lawyer George Carman, QC, appealed to Singapore's High Court yesterday to reject a defamation action brought by the prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, against the veteran opposition leader, Joshua Jeyaretnam, which he said "flies in the face of common sense and justice".

Mr Carman was summing up his defence in a highly-charged trial which is crucial to the outcome of 10 other libel suits filed against Mr Jeyaretnam by government ministers and ruling party members.

He also appealed for an end to legal action brought by groups of plaintiffs in cases that seemed politically motivated.

"It is time for a court in Singapore to bring down the curtain on claims of this kind which on fair, rational and cool analysis are not only ill-conceived but, one suspects, orchestrated claims to inflict damage where no damage has occurred," Mr Carman said.

Mr Goh accused Mr Jeyaretnam, leader of the opposition Workers' Party, of "throwing a Molotov cocktail" at him by announcing at the end of a pre-election political rally early this year that a fellow candidate had filed a police report against the prime minister.

Mr Jeyaretnam's brief remark was completely true and, since he added no comment or approval, "would never normally give rise to a defamation", Mr Carman said.

Any damage to the plaintiff from the police reports was "self-inflicted" since it was he and elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew, another plaintiff, who had arranged for the comments to be released to the press.

"The law is that if you consent to publication you can't sue on it," Mr Carman said.

But Thomas Shield, another leading QC and libel specialist acting for Mr Goh, countered yesterday that "it's quite impossible to extract any innocent meaning from Mr Jeyaretnam's words".

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Yuri Nikulin

How to grin and bear it

YURI Nikulin, who has died aged 75, was the best-loved man in Russia. His death will be mourned not just by Russians but by tens of millions in the wider Russian-speaking world from Ukraine to Kazakhstan as the actor and comic who more than any other expressed the daily woes and laughter of the Soviet Everyman.

His films were rarely shown in the west, which preferred a more sombre, slapstick-free view of Soviet life, but foreigners living in Russia have come to enjoy the virtually weekly television showings of his screen appearances as pure comedy and a reminder of the possibility of individual happiness under the most loathsome of past regimes.

Nikulin was born just after the end of the civil war, in Smolensk in western Russia. His mother was a garage supervisor and his father a writer of satirical articles — a profession which may have influenced his future career.

He had a long period of military service, from 1939 to 1946, preparing to be demobilised just when the German invasion of the Soviet Union began in 1941. He first took up clowning in 1944 when a political officer in his battalion, impressed by his repertoire of jokes, ordered him to organise entertainment for the division, which he did with resounding success. Demobbed, he tried unsuccessfully to enter drama college before answering a newspaper advertisement recruiting trainees for the Clown Studio at Moscow's Tsvetnoy Boulevard Circus.

He qualified as a fully-trained clown in 1950, and never abandoned his links with the circus. He met his wife Tatyana there, and in 1962 became director of the Moscow Circus, a post he held until his death. His son, Maxim, is now a circus administrator.

His screen debut came in 1958 with the film *The Girl with the Guitar*. He appeared in almost a dozen major features, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, but his ascent to star status was assured by a handful of short films directed by the late Leonid Gaidai. The first of these, *Samogonchiki* or *The Moonshine Makers*, was also the first to put Nikulin as the fool in a Marx Brothers-like trio with Georgy Vitsyn as the coward and Yevgeny Morgunov as the ex-con.

The trio went on to appear in a series of hugely popular Gaidai films — *Pyos-Barbos and the Extraordinary Race; Operation "Iy"*; and *A Prisoner of the Caucasus*, a romantic comedy set in a caricature Caucasus which seems particularly poignant today. They had only a cameo role in perhaps the best Gaidai picture, *The Twelve Chairs*, but in 1969 Nikulin landed his biggest role as the unwitting jewellery smuggler in *Diamond Hand*. He also starred in several of the innumerable Soviet second world war features, most successfully in *Twenty Days Without War*, made in 1977.

Right up until his last days Nikulin was a frequent TV performer, the host on the popular show *The White Parrot Club*, where celebrities would sit around a table telling jokes. His timing never faltered.

He had no enemies and mixed with politicians from both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. He was close to Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov and supported Boris Yeltsin's re-election campaign last year. The president considered him a personal friend and rang the clinic where he was being treated to inquire about his condition. He had a number of state awards, including two Orders of Lenin.

He drew affection from every sphere of today's divided Russian society, from the poorest pensioner to the richest New Russian businessman, from the most highbrow intellectual to the most brutal gangster. One of his circus colleagues said he also managed to unite the warring generations: people of his own age who had returned from the front, people of the 1960s and 1970s who grew up with him, and the young who were rediscovering him through television. "He was like a kind grandfather," she said. "Kindness was his main feature."

Despite his screen success, he always maintained that the circus was his real love. "I always believed that the most important people in the circus are the ones who force the audience to collapse laughing," he said.

James Meek

Yuri Nikulin, actor and clown, born December 18, 1921; died August 21, 1997

Double act . . . Nikulin (left) sharing his 75th birthday with the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov PHOTO: ILYA PITALEV

David Allford

Pure and simple with a touch of warmth

EVERY day thousands of City workers walk through a passageway in Farringdon past the former offices of YRM, the architects and engineers. This discreet, crisp, generous, low-lying homage to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the grand German architect who influenced so many architects of David Allford's generation, is as businesslike as it is open and friendly. It is one of those buildings that gives the Modern Movement a decidely good name.

Allford, who has died aged 70, was an open, friendly yet businesslike man and a partner in YRM from 1958 and was with the firm when the Farringdon building was being designed. He became chairman of the company when it was floated on the stock market at the height of the Thatcher-Lawson boom 10 years ago.

YRM's architecture, although rooted in the years of socialist post-war reconstruction, has always been businesslike and more American in many ways than British. Its buildings have never been sensational, but they are the sort that grow slowly on you and rarely tire. Fashions come and go, but YRM's designs for Gatwick Airport, Warwick University and St Thomas's Hospital, London, endure. They have the confidence, but not the ultimate severity of the American works of Mies van der Rohe to which they owe a considerable, yet subtle, debt.

On the surface, Allford seemed quite unlike the buildings he produced. He was certainly no ascetic, enjoying liberal quantities of fine wine, food, cigars and roaring with laughter at risky stories, especially the ones he was telling at the time. If there was a contradiction between the man and the buildings, then it was a healthy one. Allford would, of course, talk seriously about architecture, but was more likely to divert the conversation to the performance of his beloved Sheffield Wednesday, or to cinema, restaurants or French literature, on all of which he could (but wouldn't) claim expertise. Perhaps the burly humanity of the man rubbed off on the buildings which, if not as zealously pure as those of Mies, enjoy a warmth lacking in those of the German master.

Allford worked with YRM from almost the day he graduated from Sheffield University in 1952. The practice had been founded in 1944 by F R S Yorke (whose book *The Modern House*, 1934, had made a great impact on the late-flowering Modern Movement in Britain), Eugene Rosenberg, a Czech emigré, and the half-English, half-Finnish Cyril Mardall. In its early days, YRM was associated with the excitement of postwar reconstruction and the idealism of Clement Attlee's Labour government.

The design of Gatwick Airport (not the latest theme-park twoddle passengers have to fight through today) brought their skills to the attention of a wide public, by which time YRM had come to stand for modern architecture with a human face, a marriage of an elegant severity and close attention to detail at a time when far too many ambitious buildings suffered unnecessary failures and gave Modern architecture a bad name in Britain.

In 1968 the firm collaborated with the American partnership of Skidmore Owings and Merrill (SOM), also descended from a Miesian beginning, in the construction of the Boots headquarters at Nottingham and the Wills cigarette factory near Bristol. YRM in England, like SOM in America, was so much at the centre of modern design that it became an institution centred around the talents of Allford and Bryan Henderson, who joined YRM soon after the future chairman. In the late eighties, Allford and Henderson transformed YRM into a successful business corporation without undermining its integrity.

Success certainly never went to Allford's head and he remained on easy terms with anyone, young or old, willing to enjoy a large drink or a good joke. A Yorkshireman who made light of working in London, he retired in 1989 to a house of his own design and construction in Wiltshire. He is survived by his wife Beryl and three of their four children. Their eldest, Jane, died last year causing Allford much grief.

Jonathan Glancey

Peter Nichols writes: We met as 19-year-old virgin soldiers, after a year's service in India (1946), posted on to Singapore. He was leaning on a deck-rail of SS Dumera, reading William Saroyan short stories. Here we spent the first of many hours of talk, emerging from our fetid troopdeck to gaze over the side at schools of fish that skimmed the surface with outspread fins.

His India had been Kerala, mine Calcutta. He had made Indian friends, eaten and drunk with them, while I was still a Bristol bumpkin, unaware even of their chi-chi English speech, which he fixed for me long before. Sellers made it a familiar goodness-gracious joke. Mimicry is always a crucial rite of passage for the young, as they learn to copy and to mock. In time, we could do the Tootsie-Fruitsie-H'Ice-Cream scene from the Marx Bros *Day at the Races* and much of Reed's *Odd Man Out* and Lean's *Great Expectations*.

A month ago he shared our table at my 70th birthday party. The face of that young aesthete with lemon-candy-floss hair shimmered through his present character-man make-up. Just beyond him sat Stanley Baxter, another survivor from that time. With both in view, 50 years fell away.

In Singapore, he called himself Percy, a Shelleyish persona that didn't long survive the air force. He put me through a short course in modern Eng Lit: Joyce, Woolf, Forster, Orwell, Greene, the preludes of Eliot. I swallowed them all under the mosquitonets of Changi, lost to cries of "Sew-Sew" from itinerant Chinese tailoresses and farting contests from the other erks.

Percy dazzled me with visions of a new world of glass and steel — Utopia according to Corb, as I soon learned to call him, whose phrase "When the cathedrals were white," changed my way of seeing. I had always hated the grimy old buildings of Bristol, my home city, and loved the modern lines of art deco cinemas, Smiths Crisps factories and the Decca building.

THROUGH Corbusier, Percy made me see how early English churches, Georgian terraces and Brunel's Clifton Bridge were right for their times, while my gothic grammar school was a mid-Victorian matron clad in fancy dress. Architecture was also politics. Coming from Sheffield to my 21st, he pointed out my home town's impressive skyline.

Monitoring my father's quirks with similar care, he wondered why a mirror was hung above our lavatory at such an angle that only one's cock was reflected, and was delighted to learn this was for Dad to sit on the toilet-seat to shave.

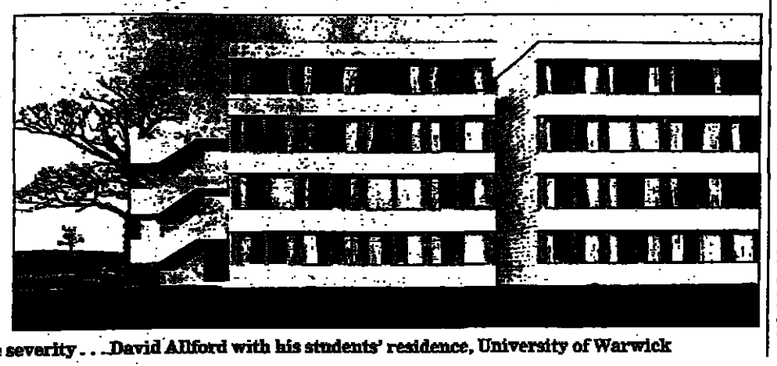
During our twenties, Percy gave way to David, who married, set up house and joined YRM on Bayswater Road, where sometimes I'd drink a beer with him in a break from the job I had, clearing up Hyde Park with a spike and barrow. One day he drove me to see the new airport at Gatwick, still a building-site, explaining how the "fingers" would work and rail, road and air meet for the first time anywhere.

With my marriage, we drifted apart, meeting rarely since the sixties. Once he rang me with tickets for one of Jack Benny's last shows at the Palladium and people around us had to ask us not to recite the lines in advance.

Meantime he had filled out, become a senior partner, a father and an eminence in his profession. He came to my play, *Forget-me-not Lane*, and was moved to see my late father brought back to life. Later he was at the launch of my memoirs, in which he figures at greater length than here, and finally, too finally, my 70th party. I had to miss his, having flown to Italy from his airport, which had also put on weight.

Somehow the time was never right to put the questions that will now remain unanswered: what price Corbusier today? whatever happened to Utopia? why have we turned back from the brink of a new and better world to a past as ersatz as my grammar school? whither modernism? But he would only have taken my arm, put his face close to my ear and repeated some tagline from bygone days. It was as though he wanted our (to me anyway) crucial friendship to be freeze-frozen on a single frame when he was Percy and we were young and, by talking day and night, could bring Utopia close enough to touch.

David Allford, architect, born July 12, 1927; died August 10, 1997



Confidence without ultimate severity . . . David Allford with his students' residence, University of Warwick

Roy James

Criminal train of thought

HE WAS the getaway driver who, in the end, did not quite get away with the most famous British heist of the century, the Great Train Robbery. But Roy James, who has died at the age of 62, was a brilliant racing driver who might have been remembered differently had he not turned so enthusiastically towards crime.

A small, wiry man with an athlete's frame, Roy "the Weasel" James was known (along with Mickey Ball) as one of the two best "wheels men" in London. As a getaway driver, he was regarded as a key member of robbery gangs operating in the late fifties and early sixties, in an era before police methods started to catch up with the increasing sophistication of the criminals.

A working-class boy from Fulham in west London, James had dreams of being a successful Formula Two driver and was reckoned to be one of the most promising in his field at the time of his arrest in December 1963, four months after the Great Train Robbery. The season before, he had won 16 races and set six lap records on the circuit and he was due to race at Goodwood just 16 days after the Glasgow-Euston mail train was relieved of £2.6 million and its driver Jack Mills coshed. So confident was James of getting away with the robbery, that it did not occur to him that he might be on the run when he was next meant to entering the pits.

Although he was a successful and respected racing driver he lacked the contacts to get the sponsorship that would take him up to Formula One level; he later justified his criminal activities as the only way he could have achieved his racing dream.

He was a friend of Bruce Reynolds, driving force behind the Great Train Robbery, and they had worked together before as part of what the press called "the City Gents" gang, because the robbers wore bowler hats and false moustaches. James would dress up as a chauffeur and again act as getaway driver, on one occasion being part of the team that robbed BOAC's headquarters of £62,000.

In his *Autobiography of a Thief*, Bruce Reynolds recounts how James drove "with incredible instinct" in getaways, steering stolen Jaguars at top speeds through London. Eventually the City Gents were pulled in and, as Reynolds recalled, the men were put on an identity parade with bowler hats and false moustaches: "Roy's hat came down over his ears. Was it any wonder that no one was picked out?"

James also had a key part in the planning stages of the Great Train Robbery. He posed as a schoolteacher wanting to teach his pupils about how trains worked and was shown the vital uncoupling mechanisms by a trusting train driver. After the robbery, James holed up with the others in their Leatherslade Farm bolthole in Buckinghamshire where he fed the farm cat, leaving behind a telltale finger-print on its bowl. His was one of the sets of prints that were to lead the police to the robbers.

Along with the others, James was jailed for 30 years. He served 12 of them and came out from prison in 1975, still hoping to pick up the threads of his racing career. He had kept himself fit in prison gyms and and had kept in touch with the sport by making trophies — he became an accomplished silversmith in prison — which he donated to former racing colleagues.

Wheels man, 'Weasel' James

But he was back in trouble in 1984, when he stood trial at the Old Bailey for a £2.4 million VAT fraud alongside another former train robber, Charlie Wilson. The men were cleared. By this time James was running a jewellery business in central London and had re-established himself financially. He also married a young employee, Anthea, who was 30 years younger than him, and they had two daughters. They moved to a large farmhouse in Epsom but he started to go off the rails. In 1993 he shot and wounded his father-in-law and struck his wife with a pistol butt in an argument over the £150,000 divorce settlement. Arrested, he said he wished he had had the courage to kill himself. He was jailed for six years, and released earlier this year.

At this final trial, the judge remarked: "When he comes out as an old man, life will be extremely difficult for him." Indeed it was.

Duncan Campbell

Roy James, criminal, born 1935; died August 20, 1997

Birthdays

Mary Allen, chief executive, Royal Opera House, 46; **John Banham**, chairman, Tarmac, 57; **Honor Blackman**, actress, 71; **Marc Bohan**, dress designer, 71; **Ray Bradbury**, author, 77; **Prof Sir Colin Buchanan**, town planner, 90; **Dr Rob Buckman**, broadcaster 49; **Henri Cartier-Bresson**, photographer, 89; **Steve Davis**, snooker player, 40; **Margaret Douglas**, chief political adviser, BBC, 63; **Anne Downey**, circuit judge, 61; **Derek Fatchett**, MP, minister of state, Foreign Office, 52; **Kelvin Hopkins**, Labour MP, 56; **Donald MacLeary**, dancer, 60; **Alun Michael**, Labour MP, 54; **Margaret Prosser**, national organiser, TGWU, 60; **Leni Riefenstahl**, film director, photographer, writer, 95; **Gen Norman Schwarzkopf**, Gulf war commander, 63; **Karlheinz Stockhausen**, composer and conductor, 69; **David Taylor**, Labour MP, 51; **Ira Yuval-Davis**, sociologist, 54.

Death Notices

GLADDING. Phyllis Mary, peacefully on 17th August 1997 aged 98 years. Widow of the late Geoffrey Gladding and beloved mother of David, formerly of Whaley Bridge. Funeral service at Uniting Church, Whaley Bridge on Wednesday 27th August at 1pm, followed by committal at Stockport Crematorium at 2pm. Family flowers, donations if desired to the RNIB. Enquiries to J & SM Williamson 01663 732064.

HARVEY. Linda, August 15th 1997. Beloved wife of Michael Hardman, mother of Rose and Ruth. Service and cremation at Hastings on 29th August. A memorial service will take place at a later date at Liverpool. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to The British Tinnitus Association c/o A. C. Towner, 2-4 Norman Rd, St. Leonards on Sea TN37 6NH. Phone 01424 436388.

Births

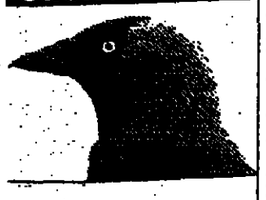
WHARMBY. August 19th Oona, Martin and Jasmin would like to say a huge thank you to the Hammersmith IVF Unit, Dr. Xiao Ping Zhai, Robert Bridges and Caroline Flint for helping to create and deliver a perfect little girl, Stella Lucy.

Engagements

MR D.E.F TILBURY and MISS R.J HART. The engagement is announced between David, younger son of Mr and Mrs Roger Tilbury, of Birdham, West Sussex, and Rebecca, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Barry Hart, of Kingsbridge, Devon.

■To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4129 between 9am and 3pm Mon-Fri.

Jackdaw



Keep mum

THE idea of social construction is wonderfully liberating. It reminds us, for example, that motherhood and its meanings are not the fixed and inevitable consequence of childbearing and rearing, but the product of historical events, social forces and ideology. Mothers who know but fear standard canons of emotion and behaviour may see the ways that they are supposed to feel and act are not ordained by human nature. And if they don't obey either the old rules of the family, or whatever is the psycho-paediatric rule of the day, they need not feel quite as guilty as they are supposed to feel. On the other hand, the words "special construction" work like cancerous cells: once seeded, they replicate out of hand.

London Review of Books on the social construction of motherhood.

Fight of fancy

FLY By Wire is the newest thing (it can only be described as "thing") from the land of All Blacks and singing cows.

It is a strange gizmo originally described to me as "a propellor-powered plane, with no wings, on the end of a wire that spins around and around in a valley."

Uuh? It took a pencil drawing to establish the facts. Stretch many wires across a gully, make them very strong and anchor them fast. Where these wires meet, make them join and hang another from there. At the end of this wire attatch a metal surfboard, with a small powerful engine and propellor at one end. Make enough room for an average sized lunatic, give him something to control the thrust direction, hoist the lunatic up to 160ft then drop him like a stone. Results; madman in crazy-pendulum-swing-action.

Fly By Wire has taken more than a year to build, half a million in local dollars, political muscle of the most cheesy order, dedication of an obsessive nature and the brilliant mind of inventor Neil Harrop, who had the foresight to patent the idea and now plans to open up Fly By Wire enterprises all over the globe.

Loaded takes to the sky and flys by wire.

Say cheese

IT costs nothing but creates much.

It enriches those who receive it, but takes nothing away from those who give.

It creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in business, and is the signal between friends.

It cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, and it is no earthly good until anyone has given it away.

If in the rush of daily life someone is too tired to give you one, may I ask that you leave them one of yours.

Nobody needs a smile more than those who have none left to give.

An advertisment in a New York department store, found in Cars and Stuff.

On the hop

JUST as a winemaker can balance his fruit with the tannins of wood, so the brewer counterpoints the sweetness of the grain with acids, citrussy essential oils and piney resins from the flower-like cone harvested from the hop vine.

Just as in wine the fruit is usually the grape, so in beer the grain is most often biscuity-tasting barley, though there may also be the tarter influence of wheat, the silkier oatmeal or the spicey rye. To take the analogy further, the contact between the juice of the grape and skin at crush might be compared with the kilning of the grain during the malting procedure, where temperature and duration can be increased to create darker colours and nutty, toffeeish and roasted, chocolatey or coffeeish flavours.

These can be balanced with a wide range of hop varieties. The pale malt in a golden, Pilsener-style is typically offset with the delicately flowery Saazer hop, taking its name from the growing area in Bohemia. At its freshest, this decidedly inland hop seems to smell almost of sea air.

Decanter on the welcome return of the use of hops.

Roll on by

CITIES and buildings provide for our every living moment. Within them we dwell, work, take pleasure. Cities are our spatial world. But too often we are purely users of these everyday spaces and structures, adapting our activities and movements to that which has already been designed. Through direct instructions (Keep left, Don't walk, No cyclists) or indirect conventions (This is the living room, the bathroom. Here is where you sleep) we are told what to do and where to do it. And too often we do exactly as instructed. But the city and its architecture offer greater opportunities. We have the potential to do much more with our bodies than just walk and drive; we should be able to enjoy urban spaces other than by working and shopping. Decades of urban technology have unwittingly created a concrete playground of immense potential, and it sometimes takes the mind of a skateboarding 12-year-old to realise it.

Xtreme . . . getting on board

The skateboard passed into the mass public consciousness in the summer of 1977. Visible on every sidewalk, office plaza, parking lot and suburban road, the skateboard became an unavoidable part of urban life. After a decline in popularity, skateboarding underwent a renaissance in the mid 1980s and its practitioners are now more committed and more numerous than ever; there are skateboarders in every city across the globe. The skateboarding sub-culture offers a complete alternative to conventional city life, replete with its own music, clothes and language, skaters have a sense of self and collective identity, and a unique way of using the urban realm within the modern city.

Skateboarders do more than scare old ladies, according to Xtreme.

Sloe gin

APPARENTLY it's bad luck picking blackberries after Michaelmas (Spetember 29) because, according to myth, this is when the devil walks through the brambles, dragging his tail across the unpicked fruit.

But you must pick blue sloes by the first frost if you want sloe gin in time for christmas. In some parts of Yorkshire, "mucky-mouth" pies are still made by baking locally gathered bilberries in sweet batter, and are served as a traditional feature of funeral teas.

On the other hand, Henry VII's physician believed juniper berries to be curative; and in 16th century Holland, doctors used juniper oil to improve the flavour of a widely used (and disliked) medicine — gin.

Gin was not always such a popular tonic, Elle Decoration.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk.; fax 0171-713 4366; write Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Hannah Pool

The **Guardian**
Friday August 22 1997
Edition Number 46,949
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Fax No. 0171-837 4530
E-mail: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk

At last, we're moving

Prescott's transport plan promises radical reform

WHAT BETTER time to start a real debate on transport than on the eve of a Bank Holiday when the roads will be choked and clogged again? The consultative document issued yesterday by John Prescott was just that: an invitation to join in the consultation process which will lead to a government white paper in the spring. Technically nothing has been decided and the document focuses on asking questions, not providing the answers. If no bold decisions are taken in the end, then the whole operation will be another disappointment. But there is such a thing as asking a question expecting the answer yes, and John Prescott's evangelical presentation yesterday pointed in a very positive direction. As the preamble says, "the public mood is for change" and what has been put on offer should be — if the public backs it up and the government does not back down — a powerful agenda for radical change.

On the threat that privatisation will make rail transport worse rather than better, the document is refreshingly clear. It has "fragmented the network and threatened services" and the government is committed to take firm action. The silver lining to rail privatisation is that it already provides a powerful negative lesson. There will be general support for the idea floated yesterday of a new rail authority to provide a new "strategic programme" for the development of the railways. Public opinion is also likely to favour the more radical end of the spectrum of options for tackling the privatised chaos of buses outside London.

Of course Mr Prescott was right, both in principle and tactics, to stress yesterday that his transport policy should not be seen as "anti-car". Many car owners use their vehicle responsibly and (especially in the countryside) for purposes which could not be met by public transport except at ruinous expense. Cars are often convenient — sometimes (dare we say it?) even fun. But an integrated transport strategy does not have to transform car use totally in order to be effective. To reduce road use by a modest five or ten per cent will already be a huge improvement against the dire forecasts of exponentially increased traffic. If the provision of better public transport to work can persuade those who run two cars to dispense with one of their vehicles (and gain significant economic benefit in doing so) they will still be car owners. In London at any rate — the situation is different in many provincial cities — only a minority of those working in the centre need be deterred from driving there. Yet in the end a successful policy will still require determined measures designed to change the existing car culture even if these upset small but influential lobbies. The balance between public transport and rush-hour road commuting will never change significantly unless all company car perks are abolished. Firms which continue to provide or to subsidise parking space for their employees should have to pay a substantial recurring tax. The money raised in this way could be dedicated to a comprehensive system of bus lanes — and more buses — instead of the present inadequate patchwork. Companies should be given tax incentives instead to offer public transport vouchers to their employees. Shifting freight back on to the railways is a more complex business, but here too relatively modest efforts (compared to the cost of motorway road-building) to complete or restore missing rail links could show a significant return.

In the end a new policy will require cash and infrastructure as well as political will. For the government, the test will come next spring: till then, it is for the public to speak up against the drift to gridlock and general suffocation.

The NHS needs more cash

Waiting lists must be cut and there is only one way to do it

LABOUR promised to restore the National Health Service to its beloved old structure. True to their promise, an old beloved NHS row broke out yesterday: rising waiting lists. To be fair to Labour, it cannot be blamed for yesterday's depressing figures: the biggest annual rise in people waiting for hospital treatment since the NHS was launched in 1948. Even before the election, hospital waiting lists had reached a record level in excess of one million. Yesterday, for the quarter ending in June, they rose again by 13 per cent to 1.2 million. This was the sixth consecutive quarter of rising numbers. Even more serious was the rising length of time people are spending in hospital queues: 47,000 patients, an astonishing fourfold increase compared to last year, have been waiting over 12 months for treatment. Two years ago, 12-month waiting periods had all but been eliminated. Worse still, some 388 patients on the present list have been waiting in excess of 18 months — a blatant breach of the patient's charter.

In a reversal of their roles in the last parliament, Tory spokesmen now express concern while Labour ministers seek to reassure public anxieties. But it was Tory ministers who began the rot when they decided last year to let waiting list numbers rise in order to avoid the even worse publicity of emergency patients failing to get a hospital bed. This was regarded by Labour then as "testimony to a total disregard for patients", but now Labour openly acknowledges that lists are likely to lengthen further in the immediate future, although they remain committed to their manifesto commitment of a 100,000 reduction by the end of this parliament.

The number of people on a waiting list is not crucial — but the length of time patients spend waiting can be vital. That was why the Conservatives deserved praise in the last parliament for their blitz on lists of patients waiting over 12 months, reducing the number from 200,000 to just 5,000 in early 1996. Research shows long delays seriously erode the quality of life of many patients, increases the chance of complications, and reduces the likelihood of a successful outcome. Old people waiting for a hip replacement, for example, may no longer be able to walk to local shops — or even remain living independently in their own homes. Remember, too, the waiting period only starts after the first outpatient appointment. Some patients are waiting up to 18 months or more for these appointments before their waiting period begins. Labour's inadequate spending plans for the NHS will inevitably mean longer waiting periods. The solution is not the withdrawal of quarterly statistics by hospital and specialty — which the NHS executive appears to have authorised just before the election — but a much higher investment in the health service. The reason why waiting times are are not a problem in Scotland is the 20 per cent extra they receive per patient.

Michael Portillo's Dizzy turn

There are signs that he is looking to Disraeli for a role model

FIRST he lost his seat; then he saw the leadership go to a man eight years his junior. Could it be that Michael Portillo will never now climb to the top of the greasy pole? Mr Portillo himself seems to think so. He might never return to politics, he told the Guardian last week. Don't you believe it. A man who had come so far in 13 years in Parliament, and who's enough of a student of politics to know that a man elected party leader at 36 will not necessarily go on to be prime minister at 40 or 45, is unlikely to relinquish ambitions he has rarely sought to disguise.

So many within his party, and some outside it, will have watched his silky memoir of Disraeli on BBC2 last night and asked: what's he up to? Could he perhaps see parallels here? Like Disraeli, he's a charismatic (to some) adventurer, with a mildly alien name. Like Disraeli, he's unable to claim to have sprung from "the sacred core of Conservatism": a deficiency Disraeli sought to put right by establishing himself as a country squire at Hughenden. Like Disraeli, he's had to confront the possibility of his party splitting on a high political issue — the corn laws with Dizzy; Europe, potentially, with Mr Portillo. Disraeli split his party and, as Michael Portillo noted, denied it office for years; yet, sustained by his "skilful mastery of political manoeuvre", he came out on top in the end. Disraeli's crowning achievement — the steering through of a programme of parliamentary reform which went well beyond the schemes of the Liberals — was based, he said, on "an audacious theft of the Opposition's clothes." Could Michael Portillo, then, be dreaming of a rehabilitation based on pinching the clothes of the Blairites? Should we read one day soon that he's buying a fine country house near High Wycombe, we shall now know what to expect.

Letters to the Editor

More fuel for BP v Greenpeace

THE speed with which BP was able to use the courts to halt Greenpeace (Law and the profits of PR, August 21) is in marked contrast to the delays which have faced Greenpeace in its court action to halt the unlawful drilling by BP and other companies. Greenpeace has faced unprecedented combined opposition from the Government and oil companies in its attempt to bring a judicial review on the legality of the granting of licences in this environmentally important region, delaying proceedings into the autumn. BP has used this delay to push forward the development of the region, and it can be argued that Greenpeace has only been acting to prevent an unlawful operation. The EU environment directorate has already ruled that the granting of licences is in breach of EU directives as no Environmental Impact Assessment has taken place — although Michael Meacher has already reneged on promises to correct this.
Mick Green.
Bronhaul, Pentrebach,
Talybont SY24 5EH.

EVEN the petrochemical industry has a duty to respect the environment. Even unelected multinational companies should face up to a little democratic accountability. And not even BP should be allowed to get away with using UK law to baton-charge inconvenient critics. BP should answer Greenpeace's questions, not shoot the messenger. Till they do, will other readers join me in a boycott of all BP products?
(Dr) Timothy Chappell.
Department of Philosophy,
University of Manchester.
Oxford Road,
Manchester M13 9PL.

IN 1990, as editorial director of Belhaven Press, a small scientific publisher, I received a letter from Greenpeace's legal department. It claimed it was being libelled by a forthcoming title and demanded that I surrender the manuscript and agree to make any changes required or suffer the full penalties of the law. The book, Animal Rights, Human Rights, by George Wenzel, was an anthropological study of the adverse effects of environmental campaigning against seal-culling on northern Candian Inuit.

I refused to submit the manuscript but had to engage lawyers at considerable expense. In the event the book was published in 1991 to considerable critical acclaim without Greenpeace's prior censorship. The incident provided me with an expensive insight into its willingness to use the law to bully and intimidate smaller adversaries when it suits *its* purposes.
(Dr) Iain Stevenson.
46 Grange Road,
Bishop's Stortford,
Herts CM23 5NQ.

Three men in search of a vote

HAD Labour's annual NEC elections simply been the beauty contests that some in New Labour would have us believe, there would probably never have been any winners at all. Which is why your leader (August 19) is absolutely right to identify the important issues at stake. This may be the last occasion on which Labour backbenchers are permitted to stand for election, and at a time when power is being ever more centralised in the party, it is vital that independent-minded MPs are elected as a check on the wider executive.

For current elections, Labour Party members are provided with a clear choice between those such as Peter Mandelson, who can be guaranteed to parade his election to the NEC as evidence that the "party has learnt to love him", or Ken Livingstone and Peter Hain from the Labour left. The question then becomes: who is best placed to beat Peter Mandelson? On the basis of last year's results, the answer is Ken Livingstone.
Mark Seddon.
Editor, Tribune.
308 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1.

YOUR call for Labour Party members to vote for Ken Livingstone or Peter Hain in the Labour NEC elections as a way of punishing Tony Blair for demanding discipline from Labour MPs is the worst kind of small-minded vindictive nonsense.

Does this Guardian slate contain the rest of the Campaign Group candidates for the NEC or is Ken picked out in the hope that you can run a "leadership snubbed" story at conference on the off-chance that he beats Peter Mandelson?

I will be voting for Peter Mandelson for the NEC because he understands that the good of the Government is vested in strong support for the manifesto and a debt of loyalty to those who put new Labour into power.
Lee Whitehead.
29 Magdalen Green,
Thaxted,
Essex CM6 2LJ.

I FIND it extraordinary that Peter Mandelson can seek to expand his influence through election to the Labour NEC in the constituency section. This whilst he is actively trying to take away constituency parties' right to vote for MPs as their representatives by forcing through the Party Into Power proposals.
Nicholas Mole.
4 Chiltern Court,
Chiltern Avenue,
High Wycombe.

PETER Mandelson says in his interview (Calls of the jungle, August 19): "I've worked for it (the Labour Party) all my life, man and boy." A J Davies' History Of The Labour Party (Abacus), on page 445, says that Peter Mandelson was once in the Young Communist League. As we recall from our direct experience, Peter Mandelson marched the Hendon South branch of the Labour Party Young Socialists out of the Labour Party and into the YCL in the early 1970s.

In these post-Stalinist times, what does Peter say about how he learnt from his experience in the YCL and to what extent has he changed? Or does he still believe in a highly-controlled, centralised apparatus dominated by the leader?
Mike Waddington.
Socialist Party Executive.
3-13 Hepscott Road,
London E9 5HB.

THE manifestos of Peter Hain, Ken Livingstone and Peter Mandelson offer a fascinating insight into current debate within the Labour Party. Some want to see the development of a truly interactive party for a modern age, in which all members can play a full role in making policy. For others it is the message that is all important; they demand little more than strong presidential leadership and a focus on the need to win at the cost of almost everything else.

In differing ways, Ken Livingstone and Peter Hain show an understanding of the need to do things differently in a world where the public is increasingly sceptical of politicians and the political process.

By contrast, Peter Mandelson avoids discussing either policy or process, preferring instead to bask in self-glory and chant the mantra of iron discipline.

Those of us who wish to extend democracy and to rebuild the public's faith in politics will look to both Livingstone and Hain. Peter Mandelson, it would appear, has nothing new to offer us at all.
Andy Howell.
Chair, Labour Reform.
PO Box 5219,
Birmingham B13 8DY.

I CAN'T believe that Ken Livingstone is asking for Labour members' support for the NEC elections. What support has he ever given them? His contribution has been to gripe and complain, provide the Tories with ammunition, and shout about policies which made Labour unelectable in the eighties.

I'm supporting Peter Mandelson as the man who helps us win power, and Peter Hain as the man who will help us deliver our promises. Ken Livingstone can do neither.
Susan Evans.
109 Hammersmith Bridge Road,
London W6.

Civil wars' deadlier sting

YOUR leader on the new menace of malaria (August 21) suggests that cheap technology and financial assistance will be sufficient to prevent the disease from continuing to kill millions of people. But you ignore the underlying problem. Many of the countries worst affected are also suffering from civil war. Countries like Tajikistan and Afghanistan are enduring the first major malaria epidemics since the 1950s, largely because Moscow's centralised programme for controlling malaria was abandoned when the Soviet Union broke up. In Central Africa, civil war has caused thousands of people to flee to new areas where they encounter malaria strains they have not experienced before, and against which they have little immunity.

As a medical charity working in these countries, we know that it is possible to treat individual malaria sufferers successfully. But we also know that a wider victory over this terrible disease is a matter for politicians as well as scientists.
Alastair Troup.
Merlin (Medical Emergency Relief International).
14 David Mews,
Porter Street,
London W1M 1HW.

WHY does this killer of three million people have so much less public attention than Aids? Could it be that malaria is much more a poor person's disease, so it does not generate the volume of sales that attract research by pharmaceutical companies?
Richard Wilkins.
27 Spring Gardens,
Garston, Watford,
Herts WD2 6JJ.

Private schools tax our patience

CONGRATULATIONS to the Fabian Society's Ian Corfield (Blunkett was right — tax perks must go, August 21) for raising the issue of the fiscal and other privileges which fee-paying schools have in Britain. The new Government has made a start by phasing out assisted places, but ending what George Walden called the apartheid system of British education remains a priority.

The answer is to raise standards in state schools, but a contribution is to end the fiscal and other privileges of the élite and socially exclusive fee-paying sector.
Denis MacShane MP.
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

SOMEONE on a recent radio programme made the excellent suggestion that those parents who chose to finance their children's secondary education should also be expected to continue to finance their tertiary education. Is it too much to hope that a Labour government will now address the issue?
Dick Tahta.
7 Barton Orchard,
Bradford-on-Avon.

Burning issue

I WAS intrigued to read that Damian Hirst is to guest-edit The Big Issue (Report, August 16). He may turn out to have something of a way with the homeless — akin to his unique way with cows, sheep and sharks. A photograph entitled With Dead Head, exhibited at the ICA in 1991, shows a grinning Hirst next to a bloated and balding severed head, that of an unidentified man of no fixed abode. It will be interesting to see how Hirst uses his editorship — I particularly look forward to the "Missing Persons" section.
Liz Brooks.
60A East Dulwich Grove,
London SE22 8PS.

New Labour will give everyone a sporting chance

A NUMBER of articles in your pages in recent days have painted an inaccurate picture of our proposals for a British Academy of Sport and the attitude of myself and my department to sport in general. Let me set the record straight.

Our commitment is to an academy which is open to sportsmen and women across a range of team and individual sports. At its heart will be the development of specialist expertise in sports medicine, science, nutrition and research — and this must, of course, be available to *all* sports.

In addition, there will be coaching and training facilities at the academy headquarters, but also in a network of training centres around the country. We have said clearly that the primary focus of the headquarters facilities should be Olympic sports and non-commercial sports, but we have never argued that particular sports should be "excluded" from our vision.

Indeed, it has always been our case that, in terms of training facilities, it is what is most appropriate for each individual sport that matters. That is why the wishes of cricket and rugby league, for example, for their own sport-specific centres of excellence, linked to but not directly part of the overall academy, are very much in tune with the Government's own thinking. The Government is absolutely committed to competitive sport, and deeply concerned that too many of our national squads have been allowed to become uncompetitive. Our performance in Atlanta last year and in Athens this year bear disappointing testimony to that fact. We intend to turn that situation around. But it isn't only the performance at the very top that matters. "Sport for All" is the fundamental watchword of our policy. That's why we are reversing the disastrous policy of the last government in selling off school playing fields. It's why I have established a specialist Youth Sports Unit and a new Football Task Force. And it means ensuring that the opportunities and facilities are there for all our children and young people to develop their talents.
Rt Hon Chris Smith MP.
Secretary of State for
Culture, Media and Sport.
2-4 Cockspur Street,
London SW1Y 5DH.

A Country Diary

NORTHUMBERLAND: Coquet is one of our loveliest rivers, originating above Alwinton and running through Rothbury, Felton, Guyzance and Warkworth to the old coal port of Amble where it runs out to sea through mud flats. Coquet's sheltered banks have harboured snowy owls, ospreys and honey buzzards, all recorded near Felton and Guyzance. A mile out to sea from the mouth of this river is Coquet Island. We cross the sound with Dave Gray on one of his puffin cruises: 10,000 puffins habitually nest here. "This year they came early, on March 10," said Dave. "But were badly hit by June weather." Seals do not live on the island but come to feed. A large bull surfaces close to our coble. "I know him, he's in charge of the females," says Dave. A roseate tern flies over. I can see the jet black head and hear the distinctive call. The bird is in decline everywhere and this remarkable island has a vital role to play in protecting this rare species. Twenty five pairs bred here last season. This is the farthest south, in the northern hemisphere that eider duck will nest but this season there is only one female with a single chick and one with four, out of 300 which lost broods. The castle-like lighthouse, built in 1841, was originally designed to complement Warkworth Castle, visible today to our west on the mainland. The island belongs to the Duke of Northumberland and is leased to the RSPB. Some of the sand-stone here went towards building Syon which must have been a long way to cart it in those days. The lighthouse was once looked after by Grace Darling's brother and it is believed that, in coming to visit him, Grace contracted the tuberculosis that caused her early death. Coquet Island's history and wildlife are fascinating and I suggest to Dave he needs a microphone to make himself heard above the wind and waves. "I'd be shy to use it," he confides. Departures from quay side steps, Amble harbour.

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Diary

Emily Barr

THE row over Connex South Central's ban on black bras has led RMT leader Jimmy Knapp to remark that "a vision of management leering at staff . . . is totally unacceptable". How true that is, and how Connex's managing director, Geoff Harrison-Mee, must agree. Harrison-Mee was director of Railtrack's south zone until a 1993 inquiry found that he had "engaged in 'touching' a female employee in a manner unacceptable to the organisation and which constitutes sexual harassment", after which he was transferred to the British Railways Board. Harasses-Me, as he is still known in some circles, managed to keep the reason for his transfer out of the press: only Private Eye has reported it, and for this we are in their debt. At Railtrack yesterday, Ms Kerr declined to confirm the reason for his suspension and transfer, saying: "We don't want to comment on someone who is no longer with us." But how marvellous it is that a sexual-harassment record that was unacceptable to Railtrack is apparently fine by Connex.

JOHN Prescott is making much of the fact that he travels by bus. On yesterday's Today programme, he proudly told John Humphrys that he had arrived on the C2 service, and quite right, too. On Tuesday evening, meanwhile, a call to Prescott's mobile was answered by a strange voice. "Who's that?" the caller asked. "It's John Prescott's son," said the voice. Using your dad's phone? "And driving my dad's car," confirmed Prescott junior. That'll be the Jaguar. So it's OK for the junior Prescotts (Jonathan is a hairdresser, David a journalist) to swan around in the guzzling Jag . . . but then again, they don't have radio appearances to worry about.

NO sooner has the Diary instituted a "Where are they now?" slot, than former minister Philip Oppenheim obligingly writes in Punch about his ex-colleagues who have been rejected, as he was, by a discerning electorate. Yesterday, we established that Gyles Brandreth is again delighting the housebound with his zany wordplay, but times are harder for those with less marketable skills. For the moment, space prohibits all but the delectable news that David Evans (ousted by the woman whose children he referred to as "three bastards") has offered jobs to several former colleagues in his loo-and-office-cleaning business. So far only Michael Brown (he of the brown envelopes) has accepted.

MEANWHILE, the Diary's campaign to have William Hague's biography published gathers pace. For the second instalment of Hague: The Unauthorised Story, please cast your mind back to 1973, when Hague was 12, but, as ever, wise beyond his years. "Ray Parkin of Rotherham answered a newspaper ad selling some unwanted Action Men, for his son, Simon," begins today's extract, courtesy of the Rotherham Star. "When he called round it turned out to be the Wentworth home of the Hagues. William's mum, Stella, explained: 'He has had hours of fun playing with them, but he's gone off them because now he's interested in politics.'"

A RESPONSE has been received to Wednesday's report that Hodder is looking for a ghostwriter for the long-awaited memoirs of another Tory figure, Sir Ted Heath. "As a professional ghostwriter, I would be keen to take up this challenge," writes Alastair Streatfield. "Among books I have previously ghosted are Conducting Made Easy by R Varney and Why I Like Killing Students by DX Peng." We suspect satire, but have forwarded the letter anyway.

A JOKE currently doing the rounds at Westminster comes to us by way of a Government minister. What, he asks, is the most popular item in the Commons canteen? The answer is, the crabstick sandwiches: they allow you to feel you're eating Mandy Mandelson for lunch.

Why teenage girls still have babies

Decca Aitkenhead

"I ALWAYS used to think, well girls who get pregnant, they're different from me. But then, I like sex as much as anyone." Susan has just turned 16. In the past year, several of her friends have got pregnant, and one or two have decided to keep the baby. "What's different, I suppose, is what makes some girls have the baby. That could just never be me."

Anyone, as Susan is discovering, can get unlucky. About 150 schoolgirls will be unlucky this week alone, and discover that they're pregnant. The luckier ones will also discover they've done okay in their GCSEs, and will probably soon become teenage abortion statistics. The really unlucky ones will have a desperate twist to their tale — an 11-year-old boyfriend, for example — and soon become tabloid sensations. But the depressingly unremarkable ones — about half of them — will in nine months' time become mothers.

We talk about teenage pregnancy and teenage mums as if they were one and the same problem, and yet even a 16-year-old girl can tell the difference. The whole debate has become obsessed with sex education, but the more interesting point is this: Susan could sit through all the best sex-education lessons in the world, and still get pregnant — yet girls like her are as likely to become teenage mothers as they are to give birth to giraffes. If we want to make motherhood equally inconceivable for every schoolgirl, we will have to think about something more radical than a few extra classes about sanitary towels and Fallopian tubes.

Sex education is not a bad place to start, though. The trouble is, we've been providing it for decades now, and still have the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the developed world outside America.

"You watch a film of a woman having a baby," reports Susan. "Is that meant to help?" A fourteen-year-old girl called Louise remembers "the Tampax lady" telling the girls they were "baby machines". Another wondered why they got taught about sex by their religious-education teacher.

If you ask around, it turns out that what they actually want to know is how to put on a condom, where to get the Pill ("Exactly where. Not just 'at a clinic'."), and "how to give a blowjob". Oral sex is the teen sexual equivalent of smoking without inhaling; you get in on the act, you can't be accused of being a prude, but nothing too bad can come of it. "Bloody brilliant!" agree the girls. The only snag is, none of them is entirely clear quite how it's done.

There can't be many religious-education teachers who'd like to teach teenagers oral-sex technique or condom ettiquette ("If the boy doesn't, like, seem to be putting one on, well when do you tell him, you know, that you want him to?"). The whole idea sounds fairly distasteful. But teenagers having sex is always a distressing idea, and this is an exercise in damage limitation. Instead of looking at the pregnancy statistics for under-16s, and arguing that a) that's what comes of giving too much sex education, or b) that's what comes from not enough, we should realise that it's what comes of the wrong kind, delivered by the wrong people. "Why can't we have someone come in from outside school, who we've never met before and won't ever see again?" ask several girls. "We could ask them the stuff we want to know, and it wouldn't be so *embarrassing*."

Just suppose, for a fantasy moment, that Labour were the radicals they like to claim, that the cabinet didn't care about the Daily Mail, and that schools were soon giving sex education that was actually helpful. Girls would still get pregnant. This is partly because accidents happen at any age, and partly because some people don't listen.

Two girls I went to school with sat through the same unusually thorough-going sex-education lessons as the rest of our class; one then got pregnant because she thought if you washed with Diet Coke afterwards you'd be okay, and the other because she and her boyfriend had economised on Durex, and used clingfilm instead.

Both girls decided to have the baby. The standard explanation for their decision is this: they are just too young to be able to project the future, they can't realise what a commitment they're making. This is true, but, perversely, the opposite is also true. For the first time in their adolescent lives, these pregnant girls believe they can see a future for themselves.

"You knew which girls at school would keep the baby, even before they got pregnant," according to another 14-year-old, Jo. "They were the ones who didn't have anything else to do." Suddenly, they were the centre of attention; their lives had taken on significance, people had to listen to them, their family and school were talking about their future and thinking it mattered. Plans were being made. They had achieved something. "It's something they've created, isn't it?" says Jo. "Babies love you back when you hug them, don't they?" Susan adds. Teenage mothers aren't stupid girls too thick to realise how great their lives could be; just girls given good reason to imagine their lives might not amount to anything much at all.

So the plan, announced last week, to invite teenage mothers into schools to tell girls about the grinding reality of motherhood is a good one but not, in itself, good enough. Disadvantaged teenage girls decide to keep their babies in much the same way as boys get into trouble with the law; because they feel they have nothing to lose.

And just as fast-track punishment won't stop disaffected teenagers from breaking into cars, so dark warnings and social stigma won't dissuade the girls from having babies.

It's now acknowledged that girls "at risk" of pregnancy are easily identifiable. They are officially, as if we couldn't have guessed, academic low achievers with poor exam prospects. While the total number of under-16s getting pregant has fallen over the past decade, the percentage who decide to keep the baby has risen; that this should coincide with the introduction of a school system which writes off academic no-hopers as league-table liabilities as early as 11 is no coincidence.

It isn't better sex education these girls need, so much as an education which doesn't blight their future before they've even had a chance to do it themselves.

'It's something they've created, isn't it?' says Jo. 'Babies love you back when you hug them, don't they?' Susan adds

You can't come in here, mate. Go back home

Mark Steel

JACK Straw is much older than he looks. He's actually somewhere between 65 and 80. The current age of what people my age call "the older generation", which said and did things that no-one younger ever would.

If the phone rings after 8.30 pm they look aghast for two seconds before exclaiming, "Who's that ringing at this time of night!" They can see a news report of armed riots in Mexico and say, "Oo look, it's raining there as well." Another of their catch phrases, especially when our generation was 11 was, "Well hit him back". For example, "Dad, I'm frightened, Terry Bennett beat me up 'cos I won at conkers and he said he's going to do it again tomorrow."

"Well hit him back."

I can understand why, if you've been through the 30s and a world war you might want to keep a playground fight in perspective, but this was the most unhelpful advice imaginable.

Firstly, it's unlikely that anyone anywhere has ever lost a fight because they hadn't thought of the "hitting him back" strategy. But also because the sub-text of the answer was, "Don't bother me, I'm watching telly."

And if anyone comes running to Home Secretary Jack Straw with a tale of torture and repression from a bullying dictator they'll get an official response that amounts to "Well hit him back".

Pardeep Saini, for example, is the surviving brother who fled the Punjab claiming he'd been tortured by the police, and arrived at Heathrow having miraculously survived nine hours clinging to the undercarriage of a plane in temperatures of -60°. His application for asylum has been denied. What possible thinking can there be behind the denial, even in the unlikely event that Pardeep is lying about the torture? Do Home Office officials think, "Well the thing is you let him in and they'll all be doing it. You'll have Sikhs everywhere climbing over airport fences and clinging on to aeroplane wheels as they fly over the Himalayas so that they can come over here and get 40 quid a week off our social security"?

You'll have Sikhs climbing over airport fences and clinging on to aeroplane wheels over the Himalayas

The Pilgrim Fathers, I was taught at school, were heroes for seeking a new world in which to live, despite their relatively luxurious journey aboard the Mayflower. They're lucky they didn't arrive in New England to find Jack Straw ordering them straight back for not filling in their application form correctly, and announcing that he'd taken this action to protect the Puritans already living there.

This attitude has resulted in Britain being one of the tougher places to attain asylum, with 2,240 successful applications out of 38,960 in 1996. At one point Algeria and Nigeria were considered safe countries, from which no applications could be accepted. Instead officials would tell applicants, "Look, if they give you any more trouble HIT HIM BACK. Do what I did when this big lad called Jimmy Wackright used to stab me every morning in the leg with a compass. One morning I just stood there and said, 'You're not doing it today, Jimmy', and gave him a forearm smash. Broke his jaw I did. He never did it again. Do that and then see how big that Abacha's secret police are. Now piss off and don't come back."

Yet yesterday's Daily Mail screeched "The Vanishing Immigrants" on its front page, claiming that 44,000 illegal asylum seekers have "vanished without trace . . . costing taxpayers an estimated £1 billion a year". How does the Mail arrive at this figure, which works out at over £20,000 each, especially as they're not entitled to any benefits? They must all be sneaking into cabinet meetings and voting to pay for Trident.

Come to Jack Straw with a tale of torture and repression, and you'll hear: "Well hit him back"

The real scandal of asylum seekers is highlighted by the Onibyo family. Abdul Onibyo came to Britain from Nigeria in 1964, and lived here for 30 years. In 1993 he was informed that, as he'd returned to Nigeria for a short time during that period he was now an illegal immigrant. This made his son illegal too, and they were both deported, Abdul being sent back to Nigeria although it was known that he was an opponent of the Abacha dictatorship, who promptly imprisoned and tortured him.

Luckily though, things were about to change, and a Labour Government arrived with the deceptively aged Jack Straw as Home Secretary. He'd promised campaigners that the situation would be different if he were in office and he's kept his word, for the Home Office are now also threatening to deport Abdul's wife Joyce and their two daughters. Who'd have guessed when he said that he'd help to reunite the family, that he meant in a military jail in Nigeria?

It makes you worry about what will happen if any of the Montserrat islanders come to Britain. They'll probably be whisked immediately into a detention centre and surrounded by officials saying, "Aren't you being paranoid assuming that the lava had it in for you?", "Our records show that you brought this on yourself by campaigning against volcanoes", and "Well if it erupts again hit it back".

Lynn Sloman gives a cautious welcome to the Government's transport plans. They are a start, but much more is needed to curb the car and make travel a pleasure

Life with less Tarmac

JOHN Prescott's much-trailed transport consultation document is finally out, and as expected it poses more questions than answers. Less than three months into office, that is fair enough. But will the new Government have the courage to move now from warm words to the tough policies which are needed to cut traffic? And what might those policies mean for the rest of us?

The measures needed to tackle traffic are clear. The Government could start with a tax on workplace parking, offset by tax breaks for green commuting. The tax incentives which encourage company-car users to drive further should be abolished. Local councils should be given powers to charge drivers entering town centres during peak hours, with higher charges on days when air quality is poor. They should also be encouraged to take roadspace away from cars for bus lanes, cycle lanes and wider pavements. Freight could be encouraged to switch from road to rail and water by a lorry weight-distance tax.

But these policies must be coupled with dramatic improvements to public transport and safe, convenient facilities for walking and cycling. We need a door-to-door bus and train information service as in the Netherlands, real-time information at bus stops and stations, and a multimodal travelcard for every town. Dutch-style "strippenkaart" tickets, valid on any bus in the country, would provide a further incentive to travel by bus. New low-floor, low-emissions buses and accessible trains and stations are needed not only for disabled people, but for passengers with heavy shopping and parents with young children. Some German bus companies offer home delivery for heavy shopping, removing the need for people to take the car for the weekly shop, and initiatives like this could be trialled here.

One in four car journeys is less than two miles, and could easily switch to foot or cycle. The consultation document says little about how this could be achieved. We need traffic-calmed streets, cycle lanes and parking, and safe routes to schools and local shops. A 20 mph speed limit should become the norm on all urban roads, except where a case can be made for a higher limit. Speed limits on rural roads should be cut too.

All this will cost money. Some could come from cancelling roads schemes in the strategic roads review. Many of the road schemes under review run counter to policies to reduce traffic, and should be replaced by a combination of public-transport improvements on parallel corridors, green commuter plans, park and ride, lorry routing restrictions and minor improvements such as crawler lanes and speed-management schemes. In Nottingham, the Highways Agency has decided, at Transport 2000's suggestion, to examine the potential for green commuting to reduce peak-hour congestion on the A52 to the south of the city. A similar green-commuting partnership with Hertfordshire Council could reduce congestion on the A1(M) near Stevenage. Such initiatives cut peak-hour traffic problems at a fraction of the cost of road widening, by persuading commuters to car-share, cycle or catch the bus.

Other options for raising finance include public-private partnerships (as in Edinburgh, where the city council is working with private operators to fund a new rapid-transit system), an employer's payroll tax like the French "versement transport", and ring-fencing of each town's revenue from road-pricing for a local green transport fund. Road charging alone could provide substantial revenue. In a city the size of York, a charge of £1 to motorists crossing the ring road in the morning rush hour would yield £2 to £3 million a year: four times as much as the city currently receives from government for transport schemes.

After traffic calming, parents are 50 per cent more likely to allow children to play out, or walk to school independently

Traffic-restraint policies such as those described here are often opposed on the grounds that they will damage the local economy. But this need not be true. Surveys in Leicester showed that parking restraint and traffic bans benefited retailers. On streets with the highest traffic flows, shop vacancy rates were greater than on streets where traffic had been restrained. Not surprisingly, shoppers preferred quiet and unpolluted streets to those filled with traffic. In York, closure of the city centre to cars led to a doubling of pedestrian flows. Shop rents have grown faster in the pedestrianised streets than in those not pedestrianised, and retail turnover has increased compared to similar UK cities. A commercial city-centre audit recommended traffic restrictions should be extended so retailers in other streets might benefit.

Retailers commonly argue that most of their trade comes from motorists, but this is not actually so. A survey of shopping patterns in five UK towns found that between 45 and 72 per cent of shoppers do not use a car for their trip, and bus users alone contribute between 20 and 50 per cent of retail turnover. The other argument against traffic restraint is that it will have an unacceptable impact on people's quality of life. But traffic reduction provides an opportunity for street space to be transformed. Instead of Tarmac, we can have living streets with trees, seats, space to play in and peace to stand and talk. Less traffic benefits children and older people especially. Our research in four UK cities showed that after traffic calming, parents were 50 per cent more likely to allow young children to play out, or walk to school or local shops independently.

Ten years ago, there would have been little support for the package of transport measures described here. But worsening pollution, danger and noise from traffic have caused a shift of public opinion so there is now net support among motorists for banning cars from city centres and taking roadspace for bus lanes.

The Government must build on that shift of opinion. In opposition, it set out a visionary framework for green transport, "Consensus for change". Now it's time to deliver. When John Prescott announced in June his intention to conduct a transport-policy review, he said he wanted the British public to judge him on his success in cutting traffic and increasing public transport use. At Transport 2000, we intend to do just that.

Lynn Sloman is assistant director of Transport 2000

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Another Halifax windfall on cards, page 15

Petrol refinery jobs at risk, page 15

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Finance **Guardian**

BT is told to cut or run in MCI talks

Nicholas Bannister
Julia Finch and Mark Tran

INSTITUTIONAL shareholders yesterday demanded that British Telecom reduce its offer for MCI by up to one-third or walk away from the £12 billion bid for its American partner.

BT admitted for the first time that the deal, a key plank in its strategy to become a global telecom player, could collapse.

In a terse two-sentence statement, the two companies said they were in talks about the economic terms of the bid and there could be "no assurance as to the outcome". However, talks continued late into the night.

The US Federal Communications Commission, the last regulatory body considering the deal, yesterday approved the merger.

The crisis was sparked off by MCI's revelation last month that losses made during attempts to enter the US local-calls market were expected to double to $800 million this year and rise even further next year.

That profits warning forced BT to review of MCI's prospects and the bid terms. A BT team led by chief executive Sir Peter Bonfield and finance director Robert Brace have been crawling over MCI's books and management plans for the past three weeks and have completed the task.

Institutional shareholders described the original terms as "unsustainable" and "unacceptable". They want BT to cut the purchase price and force MCI to redefine its business plan.

Most have refused to go public, but yesterday a spokesman for Guardian Asset Management, which owns 1 per cent of BT shares, said: "On the information we have, the current terms are wrong. They are paying the wrong price and we will not accept a bid on these terms. We want them much tighter — reduced by 20-30 per cent."

Another big shareholder said: "We feel very strongly that the original deal is unsustainable, given the new financial information. On current terms it is unacceptable to shareholders. We want about 15 per cent off the bid price and a redefinition of MCI's business plan. MCI must be forced to concentrate on the more lucrative parts of its business."

If BT was unable to cut its bid, it should walk away from the whole deal. "That would leave BT's entire international strategy in tatters, but would still be the best outcome," he said.

Another fund manager, who wanted about 20 per cent off the bid price, said: "We will simply say no if BT can't cut the price."

US analysts said there was a 50-50 chance that the deal would collapse, although some said the two companies needed each other too much to walk away from the deal.

Wall Street expects BT to win a 15 per cent reduction in the purchase price — a £2.1 million cut — and to get MCI to curb its aggressive move into the local markets or cut costs by shedding jobs.

BT's shares rose 28½p to close at 412p while MCI's fell steeply in lunchtime trading on Wall Street.

How wires got crossed

WHEN BRITISH Telecom announced its planned £12 billion bid for MCI at the beginning of November last year, the City was ecstatic. Doubts about the price were overwhelmed by support for the strategy, and the group's shares jumped 22kp.

What doubts there were focused on the regulatory hurdles ahead, particularly getting approval from the US Justice Department and the Federal Communications Commission. Few doubted that BT and MCI shareholders would support the deal.

The seeds of the alliance were sowed in 1994 when BT and MCI — the second largest long-distance phone operator in America — merged their international services for large corporate customers into a BT-controlled joint venture. As part of the deal BT bought 20 per cent stake of MCI, the largest allowed under then US legislation, for £2.8 billion but BT made it clear that it wanted to take a controlling stake at some point.

Its earlier attempt to enter the US mobile phone business by buying a 20 per cent stake in market leader McCaw came to grief when rival AT&T grabbed the prize from under BT's nose by bidding for the whole company.

The way for a full bid for MCI was opened in 1996 when the US Telecommunications Act lifted the foreign ownership restrictions. To BT the logic was simple. BT's expertise and money would help MCI break into America's local calls market, while BT would benefit from MCI's entrepreneurial skills.

BT hoped that the merger would be completed by autumn this year and MCI won 77 per cent approval from its shareholders on April 2; two weeks later BT secured a 98.5 per cent vote in favour of the deal from its shareholders.

The European Commission cleared the merger in May after securing concessions to prevent the enlarged group from dominating phone services between Britain and the US and the US Justice Department gave approval on July 7.

Then, on July 10, the plan was thrown into confusion when MCI issued a profits warning. It said losses made in its attempt to break into the local phone market were substantially larger than expected. BT's representatives on the MCI board were stunned.

City institutions were furious, and demanded to know why such a turnabout in MCI's fortunes had not come to light earlier. Most called for the terms to be renegotiated, while some said the group should walk away and that BT chief executive Sir Peter Bonfield should resign.

BT announced an immediate review of MCI and the bid terms but then infuriated institutional shareholders by not giving them any idea of how the review was progressing.

Mayhem in the markets as wheeler-dealers bale out

BRITISH Telecom's admission yesterday that its plan to merge with MCI might collapse caused mayhem in the New York and London markets, *writes Paul Murphy*.

Trading teams at sophisticated investment banks such as Goldman Sachs, Salomon Brothers and SBC Warburg have bet about £10 billion on the deal proceeding on the originally agreed terms.

These "bid-arbitrageurs" have sought to lock in potential profits by exploiting the gap between BT's share price in London and MCI's price in New York, relative to the merger terms.

The threat that the merger terms might be changed — or that the deal might be scrapped — has thrown complex trading strategies awry.

The investment banks involved face losing £1 billion or more, and traders are trying to unwind their positions early, whatever the cost.

This is why shares in BT jumped 28½p to 412p in London yesterday as almost 70 million changed hands. Shares in MCI, meanwhile, crashed from $36 11/16 to $32¼.

LAST year environmental protesters temporarily invaded this disused site previously owned by Guinness in south London and built a village run on communitarian lines and devoted to both an alternative lifestyle, *writes Ian King*.

Yesterday it emerged that the 12.8 acre site is to play host to a £175 million leisure and residential complex designed by prize-winning architect Sir Norman Foster.

Occupied last May by the environmental group The Land is Ours, the complex will include many of the accoutrements of late 1990s society they despise: themed restaurants, a 200-bedroom hotel, a 140-bedroom healthcare and nursing facility and, possibly, a police station.

It will be developed by Rialto Homes and Frogmore Estates in a joint venture with Singapore-based group Liang Court.

Announcing the deal, the partners said they hoped that a planning application could be submitted before Christmas, so that work could be started on the development by next summer.

They said a preliminary design submitted by Sir Norman for the site, which faces the Thames, would include a number of "slender high rise blocks of apartments enjoying spectacular views".

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX MacNAUGHTON

Consumers keep on spending as manufacturing output stagnates

Richard Thomas
Economics Correspondent

THE economy is fracturing in two, with a bouyant consumer sector alongside a stagnating manufacturing base, according to figures out yesterday.

Between April and June, Britain's household spending grew by 1.5 per cent, while industrial production dipped by 0.1 per cent and investment remained almost flat, according to a breakdown of economic activity by the Office for National Statistics.

The Confederation of British Industry, announcing its monthly snapshot of industrial activity, warned that the weakness of overseas demand — hit by the strength of sterling — had sent export orders down to the lowest level since November 1992, in the wake of Black Wednesday.

City analysts said the two sets of data confirmed the diverging trends in the economy, but added that the prospect of a big increase in inflation was unlikely.

David Bloom, at James Capel, said: "Gordon Brown said he would re-balance the recovery. But growth in manufacturing is nearly three times lower than consumer expenditure, with no sign of the imbalance abating."

Geoffrey Dicks, UK economist at NatWest Markets, said the booming domestic economy was dangerous. "It may be fun but it is no way to run a railroad," he said.

The ONS said gross domestic product grew by 0.9 per cent between the first and second quarters of the year, an annual rate of 3.4 per cent — unchanged from its earlier estimates. Services contributed 2.8 per cent of the yearly growth rate, with the remainder equally split between construction and agriculture, according to the ONS.

Despite the gloom of exporters, the CBI presented a fairly upbeat picture of the general economic outlook, with subdued inflation and low unemployment. After growing by 3.1 per cent this year, the CBI expects expansion of 2.5 per cent during 1998, while annual retail price inflation is forecast to rise only modestly — from 2.3 to 2.7 per cent.

The average rate of economic growth until 2002 is likely to be 2.5 per cent a year, the CBI said.

A spokesman said there was no real danger of a re-run of 1980s-style boom and bust. "We expect a surge, not a boom — and a slow-down, not a recession," he said.

The confederation expects the economy to come back into balance next year, as the effect of the building society windfalls wears off on the high street and a steady erosion in the value of sterling makes British goods more competitive abroad.

First Choice is getting shipshape

Ian King

FIRST Choice, Britain's third-biggest tour operator, will mark its continued recovery next week by announcing that it is entering the European cruise market.

The company, which is bouncing back from a difficult period two years ago, is expected to confirm that it has signed a deal with an American cruise line operator to charter at least one ship for next summer.

No one from First Choice was prepared to confirm last night that any deal was in place but market sources insisted an announcement was imminent.

The move comes as a further sign that First Choice under its new managing director, Peter Long, is preparing for further expansion over the next few years.

Although no big acquisitions are expected for at least a year, Mr Long — who replaced Francis Baron last December — is a renowned deal-maker. First Choice's executive deputy chairman, Ian Cinbb, has a similar pedigree.

At its interim results announcement in June, First Choice said it had a cash pile of £86.4 million, while trading for summer 1997 and winter 1997-1998 was described as strong.

The cruise market has grown rapidly over the past few years, with Airtours — Britain's second-biggest tour operator — making steady inroads into the market, while building society windfalls are expected to give the sector a further boost over the next year.

Airtours and Carnival Corporation jointly paid £169 million last March for Italy-based Costa Cruises, the world's fifth-biggest cruise operator. Carnival has a 30 per cent stake in Airtours and is expected to make a full bid at some stage.

First Choice shares closed ½p up at 89½p last night.

Notebook

Best option is to stay on the line

Edited by Mark Milner

EVEN veteran MCI shareholders must be shivering in their shoes. First there was the bad news. That came last month when the company revealed that it would run up losses of $800 million trying to break into the US local telephone business, double original estimates. Just to add a little extra gall, it said profits from the long-distance operations would be, for a couple of years, little better than flat.

Then there was the really bad news, to which most MCI shareholders awoke yesterday morning. The planned £12 billion agreed bid from BT could be off.

At present, renegotiation rather than retreat looks the most likely outcome and not just because the partner that pulled out would have to pay the other party $150 million. MCI still needs BT's cash, more now than ever, perhaps. Yet the British company needs an American partner if its global strategy is not to unravel. Does it really have a better option than MCI?

That leaves price. In the City there are already suggestions that BT should be looking to cut as much as 30 per cent from its original offer. No doubt there would be a blizzard of lawsuits in the US but BT should not be deterred from trying to get something nearer fairer value. And MCI shareholders complaining about a renegotiated deal should ask themselves where the price of their shares would be if BT walked away altogether.

Their only comfort, cold though it is, lies in the identity of MCI's biggest shareholder, BT. No one has more to lose.

Fatal distraction

IN THE current economic recovery, the windfall payments from demutualising building societies have acquired an almost mythic status. Policy-makers fret constantly about the inflationary effects of the £35 billion stuffed into customers' pockets. The handouts are fast becoming the equivalent of the 1988 Lawson tax cuts which retrospectively became the bogeyman of that infamous boom and bust.

This week's retail sales figures added to the sense of danger. And yesterday's breakdown of the GDP figures for the second quarter of this year reinforced the picture of an economy split between an overheating high street and frozen export sector. While production grew by 0.4 per cent between April and June, the mostly domestically-driven service sector jumped by 1.1 per cent.

But the long-term effects of the windfalls are uncertain, and the near-obsession with them could be distracting the authorities from a more familiar, and more fundamental, problem: under-investment.

The Office for National Statistics data showed that while consumers' expenditure rose by 1.5 per cent in the second quarter of the year (remember that £18 billion of Halifax shares landed in June), fixed capital formation, investment, rose by just 0.1 per cent in the same period.

A fifteenfold differential between consumption and investment should set alarm bells ringing. Gordon Brown certainly worries about it. He used his July budget to introduce tax measures designed to encourage investment, especially in small firms, as well as to bring forward investment decisions to prevent price-threatening bottlenecks.

The Treasury, at least, will be studying the figures closely to see if investment picks up. If other economy-watchers need a number to *really* worry over, this might be a good choice.

Halifax catch-22

MIKE BLACKBURN, the Halifax's chief executive, reckons his bank faces a version of catch-22. It runs like this. The Halifax has plenty of money to spend (£3.5 billion) and knows pretty much what it would like to spend it on. The catch is that everyone else knows, too, which threatens to drive the price of the sort of things Mr Blackburn would like to buy out of reach.

Let us add, modestly, to Mr Blackburn's woes by speculating what he and his colleagues on the Halifax board would like to buy.

They are known to be keen to expand the bank's treasury operations, although that could surely be achieved without exhausting the Halifax's resources. Rather more expensively, the Halifax might want to spend a chunk of its cash on a big insurer. The right deal would certainly help to create the broadly based personal financial services group on which Mr Blackburn has set his heart.

Mr Blackburn could, of course, keep his cash where it is. The trouble with that strategy is it makes the group's return on equity a handy, but hardly breathtaking 14.6 per cent. But strip out the £3.5 billion from the Halifax's capital (which would bring its tier 1 capital into line with many of its peers), rework the return and the figure gets close to double at 27 per cent.

Little wonder, then, that Mr Blackburn would like to see the money working harder for shareholders than it is at present.

The latter should not be too anxious. If the Halifax doesn't believe it can get value for money by spending it, then the likelihood is that it will give it back to shareholders — either directly or by buying back its own shares.

The possibility of a second windfall might even prevent too much further erosion of the Halifax's lengthy share register.

Police widen Co-op inquiry

Dan Atkinson

THE police inquiry into Andrew Regan's abortive £1.2 billion Co-op bid is to be widened, with the Crown dropping the private summons brought by the Co-op and freeing officers to pursue all avenues of investigation.

Withdrawal of the private prosecution means Mr Regan and his two fellow former defendants can be questioned by detectives. Sources suggested police had found the affair more complex than expected. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which in April took over the private summons against Mr Regan, his business partner David Lyons and former Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) executive Allan Green, said yesterday it was discontinuing the existing case.

Under the CWS summons, Messrs Regan and Lyons were accused of aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring theft and handling stolen property. Mr Green, who was suspended by the CWS after evidence emerged that he was colluding with the bid, was accused of theft.

The charges related to documents said to have been improperly obtained from the CWS by Mr Regan and associates. In April, the High Court described the bid as "clearly dishonest".

Both criminal and civil proceedings were launched by the CWS; the civil case was settled in May.

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Australia 2.077	France 9.677	Italy 2,821	Singapore 2.33
Austria 20.24	Germany 2.8760	Malta 0.62	South Africa 7.35
Belgium 59.41	Greece 452.00	Netherlands 3.2275	Spain 241.25
Canada 2.16	Hong Kong 11.98	New Zealand 2.42	Sweden 12.58
Cyprus 0.8470	India 57.28	Norway 11.98	Switzerland 2.36
Denmark 11.03	Ireland 1.0743	Portugal 291.00	Turkey 254,210
Finland 8.68	Israel 5.63	Saudi Arabia 5.67	USA 1,5580

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

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Halifax chairman Jon Faulds says he has no qualms about special payouts to shareholders

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN

Halifax stacks up the cash

OUTLOOK/Former building society could precipitate further windfall, reports RICHARD MILES

ANOTHER windfall could be due for Halifax shareholders after the bank revealed it has no qualms about giving back its £3.5 billion spare cash.

Reporting an 8.8 per cent increase in pre-tax profits for the first half yesterday, Halifax said it was looking for acquisitions, but had not ruled out returning some of its cash mountain to shareholders.

Halifax, in its first financial statement since conversion to a bank in June, stressed it would prefer to use the surplus money for an acquisition.

Possible targets include another insurer to complement its takeover of Clerical Medical last year.

If the search for an acquisition proved fruitless, however, the bank had "no philosophical hang-ups about capital repatriation," said chairman Jon Foulds.

This could either be through the payment of a one-off special dividend, or a programme of share buy-backs.

Chief executive Mike Blackburn hinted that the Halifax's sights were trained on a financial services business, saying "small fish were sweeter," though the bank would not turn its back on larger acquisitions. But he warned that prices were too high at present.

"In Yorkshire, we don't like overpaying," he said.

Halifax could comfortably spend up to £3.5 billion without endangering its solvency margins.

Its tier 1 capital ratio — a measure of spare cash — is 14.6 per cent, far above the regulatory requirement and roughly double the industry average.

Ideally, the bank would like to use the money to expand its insurance and long-term savings businesses, because it wants to lessen its dependency on mortgage lending and liquid savings, which account for 75 per cent of pre-tax profits.

Mr Blackburn wants to reduce this figure to 50 per cent within ten years, echoing the strategy adopted by Abbey National following its decision convert to a bank in 1989.

Halifax shareholders will have to wait until next May for their first ordinary dividend.

Excluding exceptional items, pre-tax profits for the first half were £802 million, with a strong performance from both mortgage lending and liquid savings.

Gross mortgage lending was up 10 per cent to £5.2 billion, reflecting the sustained recovery in the housing market.

Net lending jumped 103 per cent to £1.2 billion, as remortgage business fell from 30 to 20 per cent of total advances.

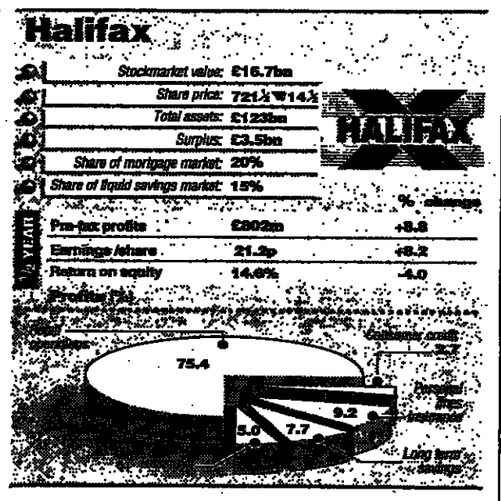
Arrears dropped sharply, falling by a quarter to 69,000, again reflecting the strength of the housing market. Repossessions declined by a similar margin to 2,751, representing just 0.16 per cent of total mortgages.

Deposits almost doubled year on year to £3.7 billion, as savers bumped up their account balances to ensure they obtained the biggest windfalls possible from Halifax's conversion.

The pattern of outflows and inflows remained "at the better end of expectations," said Mr Blackburn.

But the bank had to increase its provision on unsecured loans to £28 million after some "credit quality granting issues". Halifax estimate that almost 10 per cent of unsecured loans could turn sour because of poor underwriting checks early last year. Rules have since been tightened.

Despite a bumpy ride on the stock market, at least 50 per cent of Halifax's original members have held on to their windfall shares. Institutional investors have increased their holding from 23 per cent to just over 30 per cent, with the balance held by private investors. The shares closed down 14½p at 721½p.



SmithKline faces huge US lawsuit

Julia Finch

DRUGS-TO-RIBENA group SmithKline Beecham is facing a £940 million damages claim after 37 US health insurers filed a lawsuit alleging they had been overcharged by hundreds of millions of dollars by the company's clinical laboratory division over the past eight years.

The legal proceedings, filed by companies including Blue Cross, Aetna Life, Humana and the US Prudential, were revealed in the Wall Street Journal and come six months after SmithKline, the world's ninth biggest drugs company, paid $325 million (£200 million) to settle a dispute with the US government that it overcharged recipients of Medicare and Medicaid, the federal insurance plans for the poor and elderly.

SmithKline — whose top-selling drugs include anti-ulcer treatment Tagamet, antibiotic Augmentin and anti-depressant Seroxat — had set aside £250 million to meet the potential cost of the federal claim in 1996. Recently it warned it could face claims and legal action from insurers.

The insurers' claims closely parrallel the federal case but go on to accuse SmithKline of "more extensive fraud" and of violating tough US anti-racketeering laws.

They allege SmithKline was linked with kickbacks to doctors and fabricated diagnosis codes and they claim senior management at its laboratory division were involved.

A spokesman for SKB in the UK said the claims had been expected but were "grossly exaggerated" and described the legal basis of the suit as "highly questionable".

In a statement the company said: "In particular SKB denies defrauding any insurance companies. We will vigorously defend ourselves in this matter."

SmithKline added that while the outcome of litigation could not be predicted the company expected to be able to cover any liability without any "material adverse effect on its financial condition".

Analysts said the lawsuits were "not unexpected". Mark Brewer, of ABN Amro Hoare Govett, described the £940 million damages claim as "a scare tactic" and said the insurers were unlikely to ever go to court because their case was "too difficult to prove". The most likely outcome, he added, was an out of court settlement. The shares closed down 0.5p at 1134.5p.

German deal boosts BICC

Ian King

BICC, the construction and cables company which owns Balfour Beatty, moved yesterday to draw a line under its troubles in Germany, announcing the creation of a 50/50 cables joint venture with Dutch group NKF.

But BICC, which has axed 1,300 jobs in its German cables operation over the last two years, said at least 600 more jobs would probably have to go from the new business.

Announcing the tie-up, BICC said the new venture would be one of the biggest players in the German cable market, enjoying dominant positions in the power cable and metallic telephone cable sectors.

Under the terms of the deal, BICC will transfer assets worth an estimated £52 million into the venture, while NKF's share is understood to be worth a similar amount.

News of the joint venture was welcomed in the City — which has long been aware of the problems BICC faces in Germany — and BICC shares rose 9p to 178½p.

It follows several uncomfortable years for BICC, which was one of the FTSE 100's original constituents in 1984, but which skidded out of the index at the lowest point of the recession in 1992.

The company's German woes began around three years ago, when the German recession started to bite and spending on infrastructure started to be cut back, severely hitting demand for power cables.

BICC said yesterday that it had become obvious that a substantial reduction in capacity would be required for the industry as a whole to return to profit. Its chief executive, Alan Jones, said: "By rationalising its facilities, the joint venture can offer price and service levels appropriate to the market."

Deflated 'Mr Austerity' applies for dream job

IAN TRAYNOR on forlorn finance minister exhausted by Germany's economic woes and attempts to oust him after eight years

IN THE dog days of a Bonn summer, an air of defeatism is settling around the beleaguered figure of Theo Waigel.

The bushy-browed Bavarian leader and German finance minister is looking less than relaxed despite enjoying a break on the Baltic island of Usedom.

From his northern idyll, Germany's "Mr Austerity" has rudely knocked dozy Bonn out of its summer slumber and set the mobiles and faxes of holidaying cabinet ministers whirring.

Mr Waigel's first act of summer sabotage a couple of weeks ago was to advise Helmut Kohl publicly that it was time he reshuffled his cabinet.

Kohl's office was less than pleased. From an Austrian lakeside, the Chancellor let it be known that reshuffle talk was "superfluous".

In calling for a government reshuffle, Mr Waigel suggested one unnamed minister might need to go. It occurred to no one that he might be referring to himself. Then on Tuesday came the frank admission that he was sick to the back teeth of being finance minister.

The normally robust and witty Mr Waigel sounded world-weary and wistful. "Nine years as finance minister is enough. That is more than could be expected of me. I have done my duty and am still doing it and enough is enough."...

Appointed to his current post in April 1989, seven months before the Berlin Wall tumbled, the 58-year-old lawyer is Germany's longest serving post-war finance minister, in office now longer than any of his European counterparts. The nine years refer to a cut-off date of September next year when national elections, but also Bavarian state elections, are scheduled.

Mr Waigel wants a new job by then. Small wonder. The past eight months have left the head of Bavaria's Christian Social Union fatally wounded. Domestically and internationally, he has entered one bruising battle after another and lost.

'Nine years as finance minister is enough. I have done my duty'

As architect of the euro's stability pact, aimed at policing the single currency regime after its 1999 launch and punishing delinquents, he joined battle with the French and others and had to see his scheme watered down.

Theo Wagel: world-weary

In January he unveiled Germany's "tax reform of the century" which was to be the central plank of Mr Kohl's re-election strategy next year. The reform was grounded last month by the opposition.

He struggled to cobble together a budget for next year and a supplementary one for this year, consistently underestimating the true scale of record unemployment, overestimating the level of tax receipts and projected growth.

Yawning budget gaps opened up as fiasco piled upon financial fiasco.

At short notice Mr Waigel shot off to Frankfurt by helicopter to bludgeon the Bundesbank into helping him out of a budget and euro bind by agreeing to revalue the national gold reserves. "*Nein, danke*," said the bankers.

Then Mr Waigel had to suffer the indignity of confronting a vote of confidence in parliament which he narrowly survived.

It is no secret that Mr Waigel has long cast an envious eye on the post of foreign minister. But to obtain that would mean unseating the Free Democrats, the junior coalition partner, who, in the persons of Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Klaus Kinkel, have held the foreign ministry for 28 years. Things change slowly in Bonn.

Mr Waigel is impatient and wants to speed things up. But there is no sign that Mr Kohl is about to be rushed into anything. And for Mr Waigel to get his dream job late next year presupposes that Mr Kohl will win the election, a less than likely prospect at the moment.

Mr Waigel will probably soldier on through the crucial period defining the fate of the single currency. But having vented his frutration and weariness, he may find himself a lame duck finance minister who everyone knows is grudgingly and reluctantly in his post.

Part-timers 'suffering reduction in hours'

Charlotte Denny

BRITAIN'S growing band of part-time employees are now being forced to work a shorter working week, according to a new report which shows that up to 3 million earn too little to qualify for many benefits.

The Low Pay Unit, which released the report yesterday, said there is a widening divide between full-timers who work longer hours than they want to, and part-timers who can't get enough work.

While the average part-timer worked a 19-hour week in 1979, by 1997 this had fallen to 17.8 hours, according to data from the Labour Force Survey. More workers, particularly men, are taking part-time jobs because they can't get full-time work. Among male part-timers, nearly a quarter said they would prefer full-time work in 1996, compared to one in seven in 1984.

The unit said 3 million people, most of them part-timers, earn too little to qualify for paying national insurance contributions, and as a result are not entitled to claim higher benefit levels in case of unemployment, sickness or pregnancy. They also frequently miss out on company sick pay, occupational pensions and training.

Bharti Patel, director of the unit, said: "With a quarter of the workforce in the UK working part-time ... the evidence provides a stark reminder that (these) workers are marginalised."

The unit hopes that an agreement signed in June between European trade unions and employers which establishes the principle of non-discrimination between part-time and full-time workers will be the first step towards legal equality.

Shell tops up in petrol league

US firm plans exit route from Europe by selling British filling stations, says Celia Weston

SHELL is poised to leap into second place in the petrol retailers' league through a deal to buy Gulf's 450-strong network of filling stations and its UK marketing operations from US parent company Chevron.

The deal is expected to lead to the direct loss of up to 500 jobs because Shell does not want to buy Gulf's refinery at Milford Haven, south Wales, where 250 people work, or the company's Cheltenham headquarters, which employs 215.

If negotiations between Chevron and Shell, its preferred bidder, are successful, the sale will give Shell a combined branded market share of 17.5 per cent, ahead of BP/Mobil's 16 per cent share but still behind Esso's 19 per cent.

Shell already has 1,700 petrol stations and recently acquired an additional 50 sites in Germany from Statoil and about 80 in France from Repsol.

But the latest deal, on which neither side would put a price, is unlikely to lead to lower prices for motorists despite Esso's Pricewatch campaign.

Shell would also acquire three Gulf distribution terminals, in Ellesmere Port, West Bromwich and Cardiff.

The move by Chevron to abandon its UK filling station network and precipitate the closure of its Milford Haven refinery follows the collapse of negotiations in May last year for a merger with French-owned Elf and US firm Murco.

Chevron said at the time it intended to review all options including the sale, in whole or in part, of its UK operations. The offer attracted several potential buyers, including Shell. But no acceptable bid was received for the whole company or the refinery, a spokeswoman said yesterday.

Gulf also confirmed yesterday that it wanted to sell its 50 per cent stake in the Pembroke Cracking Company, next to Milford Haven, to its joint-venture partner Texaco.

Negotiations on both deals are expected to be completed by the end of this year although Shell will have to secure regulatory approval for its purchase of Gulf's filling station network.

The proposed sale comes as confirmation of the US oil company's view that it was time to give up the unequal struggle against ever-tighter refining margins in the European market. It will concentrate on its exploration and production strengths, and its American home market.

On a turnover of more than £2 billion the company made a profit of only £30.7 million last year. This illustrates the savage squeeze on profit margins for all competitors in the European petrol retailing market. That will continue because production capacity throughout Europe is expected to outstrip sales.

Shell's production capacity of 71 million tonnes of oil products a year already significantly outstrips its sale capacity of 65 million tonnes.

This contributes to an annual European surplus of some 20 million tonnes and helps keep the UK as a significant exporter of gasoline, according to analysts Wood Mackenzie.

M&S spurred by Cologne success

Julia Finch

MARKS & Spencer, once reluctant to invest in Germany, is to open three stores in Europe's biggest market next autumn after the success of its pilot venture in Cologne.

The stores, in Dortmund, Essen and Wuppertal, will be the same size as an average British store and stock a wide range of M&S fashions, food and home furnishings. The company said it planned to open up to 20 stores in Germany.

M&S has 36 stores across Europe, including 20 in France, and 55 franchised outlets. Last year they generated a profit of £38 million for the group.

The Cologne store opened last October. The location of the first four German stores is the result of research by the group which identified the Rhine-Ruhr area as the best entry point.

Last month M&S said it was spending £193 million boosting its UK floorspace with the purchase of 20 Littlewoods stores. It is also developing the UK's biggest Marks & Spencer in Manchester, which at 200,000 sq ft will be 25 per cent bigger than the company's flagship Marble Arch store.

● Sainsbury's Bank said deposits from customers exceeded £700 million, almost double the figure of two months ago, as its high savings rates drew customers from traditional banks. It now has 400,000 customers.

The bank, set up in February by Britain's second-largest food retailer and the Bank of Scotland, also said it will raise the interest rates paid on instant-access savings accounts to 6.5 per cent from 6.15 per cent.

informative:

With effect from 5 September 1997 the following interest rates will apply:

Mortgage

	From	To
All loan amounts	7.70% pa	7.95% pa

Equity Release Loan

If a mortgage is held with First Direct or no other mortgage is outstanding on your property:

	From	To
All loan amounts	7.70% pa	7.95% pa

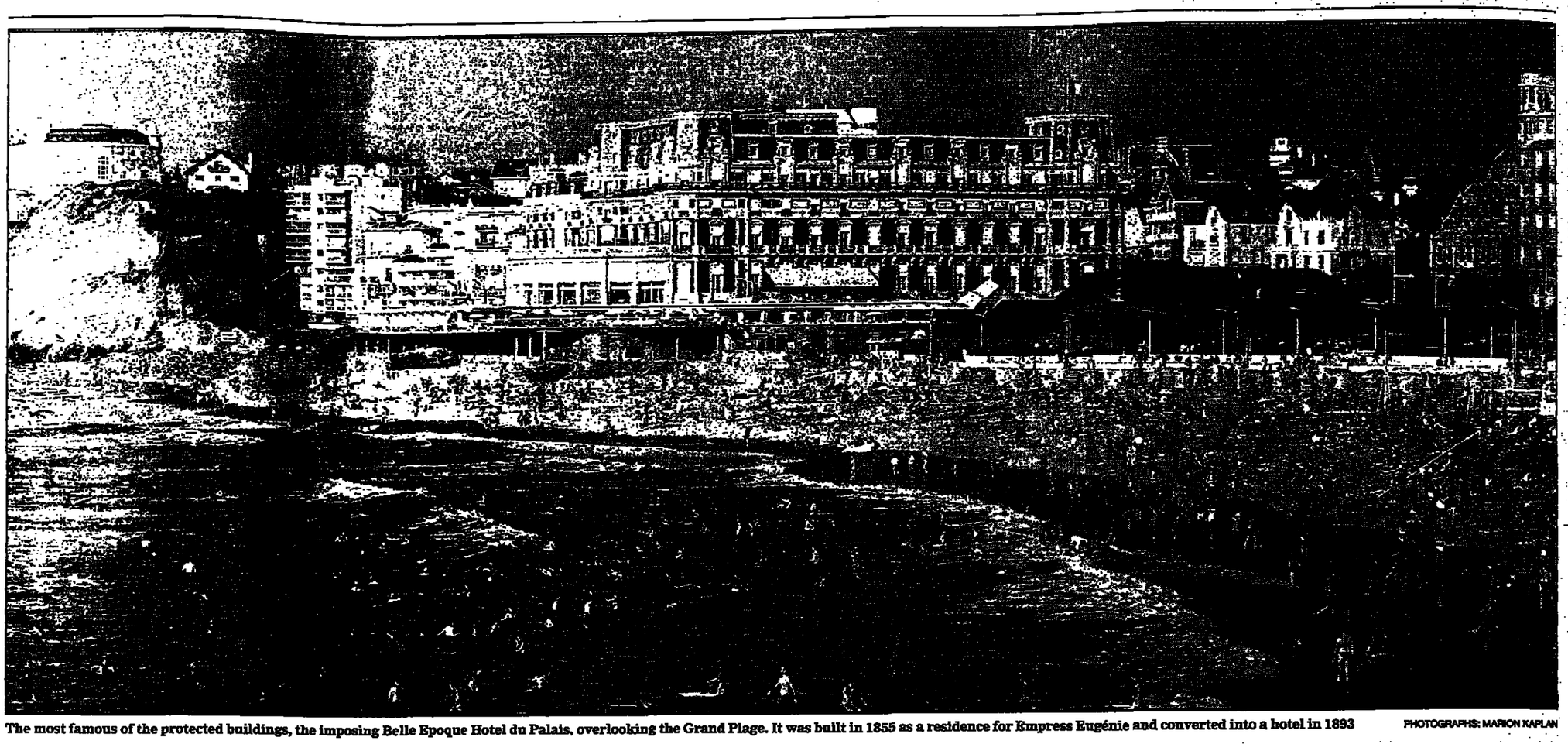
If a mortgage is held which is not with First Direct:

All loan amounts	9.70% pa	9.95% pa

first direct

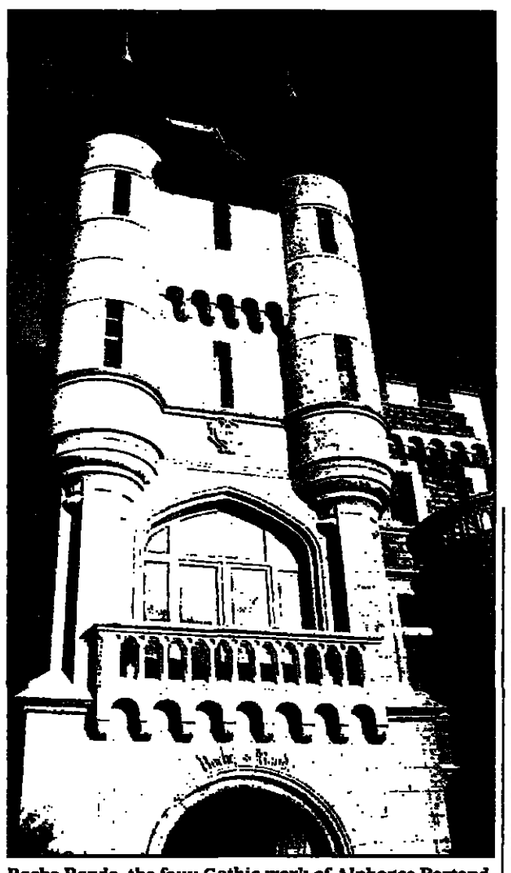
First Direct is a division of Midland Bank plc Member HSBC Group

The Guardian



The most famous of the protected buildings, the imposing Belle Epoque Hotel du Palais, overlooking the Grand Plage. It was built in 1855 as a residence for Empress Eugénie and converted into a hotel in 1893 PHOTOGRAPHS: MARION KAPLAN

Biarritz future in its English past



Roche Ronde, the faux-Gothic work of Alphonse Bertand, was built on the Avenue de l'Impératrice in 1884

Paul Webster on how resort rebelled against a wave of high-rise developments and hit back by ejecting the mayor and protecting 600 of its buildings

The art déco Casino Municipal, which dominates the Grand Plage

Le Goëland (The Seagull), with its spiky towers, is set in the old port but its origin is unknown. It was transformed in 1904

FIFTY years of drift towards skyscraper development on the French Basque coast has been halted. The resort of Biarritz — despite links with Empress Eugénie, who made it a retreat for Europe's crowned heads, and Edward VII who used the town as a political playground — looked destined to be buried under a wave of concrete that has bespoiled much of the French coastline.

Gaullist councillors tried to force through a 50-acre high rise development on the cliffs and demolish the extraordinary art déco municipal casino to make way for a hotel complex.

Angered by years of dubious development, the rest of the council resigned. The mayor was replaced by a centre party rival backed by both socialists and conservatives — and a decision was taken to place preservation orders on more than 600 buildings of historical or architectural merit.

A team of local architectural detectives, answerable to the culture ministry, has been cataloguing worthwhile buildings along the Basque coast where the 19th century aristocracy was followed in the 1920s by artists, industrialists and fashion designers. But in many cases, attempts to stop destruction of exceptional buildings came too late for the new preservation order.

Biarritz has no rival among the English-inspired rush for sea air that created Nice, Cannes, Dinard, Deauville and Le Touquet, when it comes to extravagant folklore and the follies of the super-rich.

Some of the 230 seaside villas built in this Atlantic resort during the 19th and early 20th centuries are strange enough to figure in Gothic horror films. Others are discreet country-style houses with picturesque names like Darling and Esmeralda.

Standing haughtily above the rest are scores of mansions and chateaux, built by Europe's richest and most noble families, that provide a unique record of competition between British, French and Spanish builders to design the most luxurious seafront architecture.

One of the architectural team, Pierre-Jean Arthé-Lassère, pointed out hideous examples of seventies and eighties buildings – mainly high-rise flats – built over the ruins of irreplaceable Belle Epoque and art déco villas and chateaux.

"Luckily, the protection of worthwhile buildings is now a priority all along the Basque coast," he said. "There really is a new awareness of the damage done by the race to build cheap holiday homes."

At the town hall, a converted department store that overlooks beaches where world surf championships are held, the mayor, Didier Borotra, said he believed that Biarritz's example would be followed by other resorts worried by modern developments.

"When you see the harm done to other holiday places such as the Riviera, it really was time to say stop," he said.

The council's programme includes a down-to-earth housing plan to bring back young families, but the highly visible, and so far unique, government-backed conservation law is also part of a scheme to rejuvenate the population by increasing tourist potential and creating jobs.

"In 20 years, the most sought-after seaside resorts will be those that look and feel different," the mayor said.

"The protection programme will provide work for our children. Frankly, what is mediocre just doesn't work. We're banking on quality where the car isn't king and uniformity is out."

A new inventory of the 230 protected villas is so detailed that in addition to clearing up the origins of The Woodshed, Argizagita, Chatean Gramont and the Mona Lisa, among dozens of other homes, there is also a repertory of international architects and original plans.

The strong English link forms part of our eccentric national history that included King Edward's nomination in Biarritz of Asquith as prime minister in 1908. Several buildings merit as close a study as the Domaine de Françon, developed by the shipowner John Pennington-Mellor in 1879, when Biarritz followed Pau as the great south-western attraction for an introverted British colony.

A 100-page official publication has been devoted to this example of what was called the Old English style. Françon is now a holiday home for 450 parents and children from poor families, but the exterior and interior, built entirely by British craftsmen identified by name in the official account, remain untouched.

Another tribute to the British heritage would be better forgotten.

In memory of Queen Victoria's holidays in Biarritz, the ugliest of modern skyscraper blocks of holiday flats, overlooking the beach, has been named Victoria Surf.

This was the disgraced Gaullist council's last poisoned architectural gift to the town and nobody here is amused.

'When you see the harm done to other holiday places, such as the Riviera, it really was time to say stop'

The mayor, Didier Borotra (above)

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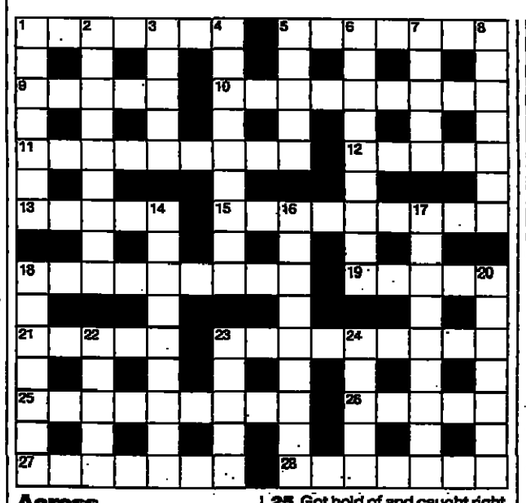


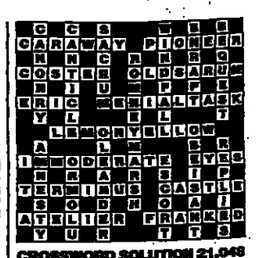
Across

1 Yellow bird (7)
5 The narrow path of idiot at famous Downing Street address (7)
9 Wait turn before you get to turn over (2-3)
10 Used pen to copyright item of stationery (9)
11 Tyres feel worn, so crawl? (9)
12 Medication requiring point, then so be it — about turn! (5)
13 Red-head in silly sketch (5)
15 Melon cut by axes consumed to add gas (9)
18 Paul's invested in property values (9)
19 Cat's tail thrashing fish (5)
21 Bread is a status symbol (5)
23 Frank conceals evidence of disappointment at unforeseen problem (9)
25 Got hold of and caught right away (9)
26 The Greatest Victory in Europe must be quick (5)
27 The eternal superlative peak (7)
28 Awfully sorry about Kent's openers getting awkward deliveries (7)

Down

1 Very pleased having let off steam? (7)
2 Eglantine, terribly stiff (9)
3 The sward on these islands raised prestige (5)
4 "Got any hash?", girl interjects (hardly a kid!) (5-4)
5 Object in article to tax (5)
6 Use tool (9)
7 Model no foil for brave retreat (5)
8 Report renegade hiding in near desperation (7)
14 Property investment by fabled loser? (4-5)
16 Beatles' hit which can't be brought back? (9)
17 Adjacent or hypotenuse? (9)
18 Banging on drums may be a cause or a symptom? (7)
20 Abaci can be reels (7)
22 Corporal perhaps gets clean away (5)
23 Ad hoc tetrad entertains two of them (5)
24 Flight unit way above the atmosphere (5)

Solution tomorrow



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